

Homonyms are two or more words with the same (or similar) pronunciation but different spellings and meanings. Writing the wrong homonym is very confusing to the reader. Here are some common homonyms:

- **axe** (tool for chopping wood); **acts** (actions; performs in)
He sharpened his **axe** before he began chopping wood.
Marcella **acts** in commercials and plays.
- **affect** (to change something); **effect** (a result)
Working as a rock and roll singer has **affected** her hearing.
One of the **effects** of more education is higher income.
- **brake** (device for stopping a car); **break** (to make into pieces)
His car's **brakes** failed, and he hit another car.
He dropped a coffee mug, but it didn't **break**.
- **our** (possessive pronoun); **hour** (60 minutes)
We love **our** new car.
The train was an **hour** late.
- **it's** (contraction of *it is*); **its** (possessive pronoun)
Where is the remote control? **It's** missing.
My car won't start. **Its** battery is dead.
- **knew** (past tense of *know*); **new** (latest)
I **knew** that Marcia wasn't telling the truth.
I just bought a **new** car.
- **right** (correct; direction); **write** (put words on paper)
He gave all the **right** answers and passed the test.
Please **write** your answers in pencil on this answer sheet.
- **there** (a certain place); **their** (possessive pronoun); **they're** (contraction of *they are*)
I looked all over the kitchen, but I can't find my keys **there**.
Nancy and Sally bring **their** lunches to work every day.
Frank and Kevin said **they're** going to the zoo.
- **wear** (have on clothes); **where** (a place)
He likes to **wear** brand new designer jeans every day.
Do you know **where** Mr. Lawrence is?
- **weather** (climate conditions); **whether** (if)
I hope that the **weather** is nice for our picnic.
Do you know **whether** or not Sue is working late tonight?

Homonyms are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings.

Tip

To use the right homonym, compare the meanings. Then use the spelling for that meaning.

Questions 1 through 5 refer to the following information. Circle the number of the one best answer to each item.

(1) You want a great knew personal music player. (2) How can you buy the right won? (3) You can get a portable CD player or a portable radio. (4) You can also get the latest invention, an MP3 player. (5) An MP3 player plays special music files called MP3s. (6) You can buy and download MP3 songs from the Internet and then listen to them on your player. (7) When choosing a good MP3 player, look for a large memory. (8) Sum people have put their whole music libraries on their players. (9) Also look for good sound. (10) You wouldn't want the music to sound week when you play it back. (11) Finally, the player should have a plug for an extra headset. (12) There is no telling when you will want to share your music with a friend.

Correction

- 1 Sentence 1: **You want a great knew personal music player.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 1?

- ① replace great with grate
- ② replace knew with new
- ③ replace personal with personnel
- ④ replace player with Player
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Correction

- 2 Sentence 2: **How can you buy the right won?**

Which correction should be made to sentence 2?

- ① replace you with You
- ② replace buy with by
- ③ replace right with write
- ④ replace won with one
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Correction

- 3 Sentence 8: **Sum people have put their whole music libraries on their players.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 8?

- ① replace Sum with Some
- ② replace their with there
- ③ replace their with they're
- ④ replace whole with hole
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Correction

- 4 Sentence 10: **You wouldn't want the music to sound week when you play it back.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 10?

- ① replace wouldn't with woodn't
- ② replace wouldn't with would'nt
- ③ replace to with too
- ④ replace to with two
- ⑤ replace week with weak

Correction

- 5 Sentence 12: **There is no telling when you will want to share your music with a friend.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 12?

- ① replace There with They're
- ② replace There with Their
- ③ replace to with two
- ④ replace to with too
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Topic Sentences and Paragraphs

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences related to a specific subject. A good paragraph has several body sentences that give details that support the main idea of the paragraph.

The main idea is stated in the paragraph's **topic sentence**. The topic sentence

- states the main idea of the paragraph
- is general enough to introduce the more specific body sentences
- is usually the first sentence in the paragraph

The **topic sentence** of a paragraph states the paragraph's main idea. A good topic sentence should be general enough to introduce all of the specific details in the body sentences. Usually, a topic sentence is first sentence in the paragraph.

Tip

The GED asks about topic sentences in several ways. Test items may ask you to revise a topic sentence, choose the best topic sentence to insert, or move the topic sentence to the proper place.

Whenever an item asks about the first sentence of a paragraph, try to decide if the question is about topic sentences. If so, then look for the best topic sentence for the paragraph.

Example:

topic sentence

Many experts do not agree on where the roller coaster was invented. Some experts say that the first roller coaster was invented in Russia in the 1700s. They say that the Russians built large slides covered with ice. People, including royalty, would go down the slides in large sleds. Later, wheels were added to the sleds so that people could ride all year round. Other experts, however, say that the first roller coasters were invented in France. They say that in 1817, the world's first two roller coasters were constructed outside of Paris. However, the roller coasters' name—"Russian Mountain," in English—seemed to give credit to the Russians, adding to the confusion. Therefore, the true history of the invention of the roller coaster will have to remain a mystery.

In this paragraph, the topic sentence, "Many experts do not agree on where the roller coaster was invented," states the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence introduces the body sentences of the paragraph, which present the two different theories of where roller coasters were invented.

GED test items may ask you to

- choose the best way to revise a topic sentence
- move a topic sentence to the correct place in the paragraph
- select the correct topic sentence to insert into the paragraph

GED Readiness

Questions 1 through 4 refer to the following information. Circle the number of the one best answer to each item.

A

(1) Merry-go-rounds are interesting machines. (2) In the 12th century, Arab horseback riders would test their skills by throwing and catching clay balls as they rode their horses. (3) European riders learned this custom and practiced their skills riding wooden horses suspended from a large wooden wheel—the first merry-go-round. (4) Eventually, merry-go-rounds became popular with French children and were later exported to the United States.

B

(5) Merry-go-rounds were installed throughout the United States in public parks, amusement parks, and traveling fairs. (6) Manufacturers competed with one another to build elaborate, colorful merry-go-rounds. (7) In fact, the period from about 1860 to 1930 was called the “Golden Age” of the merry-go-round because of the many beautiful rides created during this time. (8) In the United States, merry-go-rounds became popular forms of entertainment.

C

(9) Experts estimate that of the 7,000 merry-go-rounds built during the Golden Age, only about 300 are left. (10) People still enjoy the surviving devices at fairs and amusement parks. (11) Others collect horses from these masterpieces.

Revision

- 1** Sentence 1: **Merry-go-rounds are interesting machines.**

Which is the most effective rewrite of sentence 1?

- ① The first merry-go-round was invented over 700 years ago.
- ② The merry-go-round was an important invention.
- ③ Merry-go-rounds are fun and entertaining.
- ④ The merry-go-round has a long, surprising history.
- ⑤ Merry-go-rounds are fun entertainment for children.

Revision

- 2** Sentence 7: **In fact, the period from about 1860 to 1930 was called the “Golden Age” of the merry-go-round because of the many beautiful rides created during this time.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 7?

- ① move sentence 7 to the end of paragraph A
- ② move sentence 7 to the beginning of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 7 to follow sentence 5
- ④ move sentence 7 to the end of paragraph B
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Revision

- 3** Sentence 8: **In the United States, merry-go-rounds became popular forms of entertainment.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 8?

- ① move sentence 8 to the end of paragraph A
- ② move sentence 8 to the beginning of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 8 to follow sentence 6
- ④ move sentence 8 to the beginning of paragraph C
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Construction Shift

- 4** Which sentence would be most effective if inserted at the beginning of paragraph C?

- ① No one can ride on merry-go-rounds any more.
- ② People still love merry-go-rounds today.
- ③ Today, people collect parts from old merry-go-rounds.
- ④ These beloved machines are now less and less common.
- ⑤ Merry-go-rounds are fun to ride in summer.

The sentences after the topic sentence are called **body sentences**. A good paragraph should have several body sentences which

- are specific
- are in a logical order
- support the main idea of the paragraph

When all of the body sentences support the main idea of the paragraph, the paragraph has **unity**. When the sentences are in a logical order, the paragraph has **coherence**.

Example:

A good paragraph should be **unified** (all of the sentences should support the main idea of the paragraph) and **coherent** (the sentences are in a logical order).

Tip

If a test item asks you to move or remove a sentence, decide first whether you need to move the sentence to another place in the same paragraph, move it to another paragraph, or remove it completely. Then look for the option that matches your answer.

City Transit Lines' new Electronic Fare Card may be for you! This new service lets you purchase and store value on your card using the Internet or convenient pay stations at subway stops and bus stations. With the new Fare Card, you no longer have to fumble for exact change or stand in long lines to pay your fare. Simply store value on your card using cash or a credit card. Your fare will be automatically deducted when you board a bus or enter a subway station. To get a new Electronic Fare Card, go to any bus or subway station, or visit City Bus Lines' new website.

In this paragraph, all of the sentences are about the main idea, the new payment system, so the paragraph has unity. The sentences are in logical order, so the paragraph has coherence.

Questions on the GED may ask you to remove or rewrite sentences in order to improve the unity of the paragraph.

Example:

(1) City Transit Lines' new Electronic Fare Card system has been a resounding success. (2) Since the program began one month ago, over 70 percent of fares are being paid with the new cards. (3) Lines at subway stations, which used to be 10 commuters long during rush hour, are now almost non-existent. (4) Bus and subway riders agree that the new cards save time and money. (5) Riders also feel that the subway stations need to be cleaner, and that trains should run all night on the airport line.

What is the main idea of the paragraph? Which sentence does not belong?

The main idea of the paragraph is the success of the new payment system. Sentence (5), which is about cleaner stations and extended schedules, is not related to this topic.

Questions 1 through 4 refer to the following announcement. Circle the number of the one best answer to each item.

A

(1) The Green Street Subway Station will be closed from January 2 to March 29 for repairs and renovation. (2) During this time, a number of improvements will be made to the track and station. (3) The track between Green Street and Flynn Street will be repaired. (4) New turnstiles and fare card vending machines will be installed. (5) A new newsstand will open, and a space will be created for a new gourmet coffee shop. (6) Many people hope that Corrine's Coffee will open in that space, because it's their favorite coffee shop.

B

(7) While the station is closed, passengers may use the Brown Street and Flynn Street stations or they can ride free buses to and from Green Street Station. (8) People who drive or walk to work will not be affected.

C

(9) The improvements to the Green Street Subway Station are only part of City Transit Lines' progress. (10) Five new bus lines will be launched on January 2. (11) This summer, extra buses will be added to route 146, Beach Express. (12) Finally, a new exit will give passengers direct access from Green Street Station to the new Skyline Tower Mall.

Construction Shift

- 1** Sentence 3: **The track between Green Street and Flynn Street will be repaired.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 3?

- ① move sentence 3 to the beginning of paragraph A
- ② move sentence 3 to the beginning of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 3 to follow sentence 10
- ④ remove sentence 3
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Construction Shift

- 2** Sentence 6: **Many people hope that Corrine's Coffee will open in that space, because it's their favorite coffee shop.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 6?

- ① move sentence 6 to follow sentence 3
- ② move sentence 6 to the end of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 6 to follow sentence 10
- ④ move sentence 6 to follow sentence 12
- ⑤ remove sentence 6

Construction Shift

- 3** Sentence 8: **People who drive or walk to work will not be affected.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 8?

- ① move sentence 8 to the end of paragraph A
- ② move sentence 8 to the beginning of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 8 to the beginning of paragraph C
- ④ move sentence 8 to follow sentence 9
- ⑤ remove sentence 8

Construction Shift

- 4** Sentence 12: **Finally, a new exit will give passengers direct access from Green Street Station to the new Skyline Tower Mall.**

Which revision should be made to the placement of sentence 12?

- ① move sentence 12 to follow sentence 5
- ② move sentence 12 to the beginning of paragraph B
- ③ move sentence 12 to the end of paragraph B
- ④ remove sentence 12
- ⑤ no correction is necessary

Joining and Dividing Paragraphs

Dividing Paragraphs

A good paragraph should have **unity**—all of the sentences should support the main idea of the paragraph. When you write, you should make sure that each paragraph addresses only one main idea. If the paragraph addresses two main ideas, then you should divide it into two paragraphs.

Example:

Parking rules are changing in the Buena Park neighborhood. Starting July 1, new parking regulations will go into effect, banning parked trucks on neighborhood streets overnight. All trucks and vans need to be parked in off-street parking lots or garages. Trash collection regulations are also changing. Effective July 1, trash collection day will switch from Wednesday to Thursday. Furthermore, we will be switching to a blue-bag recycling program. Put all metal, glass, and paper recyclables in blue trash bags available at all supermarkets.

Tip

When joining or dividing paragraphs, find the main idea of the paragraph(s). If a paragraph has two main ideas, divide it. If two paragraphs have the same main idea, join them.

This paragraph addresses two main ideas: parking and trash collection, so it should be divided into two paragraphs. Begin the second paragraph with the sentence, "Trash collection regulations are also changing."

Joining Paragraphs

Sometimes two paragraphs contain information on the same main idea. In this case, the paragraphs should be joined.

Example:

Street cleaning in the Buena Park neighborhood takes place on the first Tuesday of every month. On that day, parking is banned on the north and west sides of the street from 8:00 to noon.

From noon until 5:00 P.M. every day, parking is banned on the south and west sides of the street. If your car is parked illegally during any of these times, it will be ticketed and towed.

Both of the paragraphs are about the new street cleaning rules, so the paragraphs should be joined.

GED Readiness

Questions 1 through 4 refer to the following memo. Circle the number of the one best answer to each item.

To: All Employees
From: Tony Chaitin, Payroll

A

(1) Beginning January 1, our company will offer an exciting new service: direct deposit of payroll checks to your bank account. (2) This memo details the advantages of direct deposit and tells you how to sign up. (3) Management is still discussing the increase of insurance benefits.

B

(4) Direct deposit will help employees in several ways. (5) First, you will no longer have to go to the bank or wait in line to deposit your check. (6) If you are sick or on vacation, your pay will go directly into your account.

C

(7) In addition, you will no longer have to wait for your check to clear. (8) With the new system, funds will be available at 2:01 A.M. on payday.

D

(9) To sign up, simply complete the attached form. (10) You will need to know the name and address of your bank, your account number, and the routing number of your bank. (11) The form shows where to find these numbers on a blank check. (12) Simply return the form to Human Resources. (13) The procedure for changing or stopping your direct deposit is also easy. (14) If you want to change banks or accounts, simply complete a new copy of the direct deposit form. (15) If you want to stop direct deposit, check the appropriate box on the form and turn it in. (16) Direct deposit will stop and you will begin to get traditional checks again.

E

(17) You will continue to get a printed pay stub each payday. (18) Your check stub will show your total hours worked, gross pay, withholding for taxes, Social Security, and employee deductions for insurance and other benefits. (19) The stub will also show contributions to your retirement plan. (20) You can also get a form to sign up for the retirement plan from Human Resources.

Construction Shift

- 1 Which revision would improve the effectiveness of the memo?
- ① remove paragraph A
 - ② join paragraphs A and B
 - ③ remove sentence 1
 - ④ remove sentence 2
 - ⑤ remove sentence 3

Construction Shift

- 2 Which revision would improve the effectiveness of the memo?
- ① remove paragraph B
 - ② remove paragraph C
 - ③ join paragraphs B and C
 - ④ join paragraphs C and D
 - ⑤ no correction is necessary

Construction Shift

- 3 Which revision would improve the effectiveness of the memo?
- Begin a new paragraph with
- ① sentence 12
 - ② sentence 13
 - ③ sentence 14
 - ④ sentence 15
 - ⑤ sentence 16

Construction Shift

- 4 Which revision would improve the effectiveness of the memo?
- ① remove paragraph E
 - ② remove sentence 18
 - ③ remove sentence 19
 - ④ remove sentence 20
 - ⑤ no correction is necessary

Transitions Within Paragraphs

When a paragraph is **coherent**, all of the sentences are in a logical order. To show the relationship among the ideas in the sentences, use **transitions**—words such as *however*, *for example*, and *in contrast*. These words make it easier for the reader to understand the relationship of the ideas in the paragraph.

Examples:

- **No transition:** He went to the supermarket. He forgot to buy milk.
With transition: He went to the supermarket. **However**, he forgot to buy milk.
- **No transition:** She's very careful about her diet. She tries to eat foods low in fat and cholesterol.
With transition: She's very careful about her diet. **For example**, she tries to eat foods low in fat and cholesterol.
- **No transition:** Janice loves to swim for exercise. Her husband would rather play basketball with his friends.
With transition: Janice loves to swim for exercise. **In contrast**, her husband would rather play basketball with his friends.

Use **transitions** to add an idea, show contrast among ideas, introduce an example, or introduce a result.

Tip

Read the sentences before you add a transition. Then choose the transition that shows the relationship between the two sentences.

You can also use transitions when you join sentences with semicolons.

Example:

Janice loves to swim for exercise; **in contrast**, her husband would rather play basketball with his friends.

Here are some common transitions:

Add an idea: also, in addition, moreover, furthermore

Give a contrasting idea: however, in contrast

Give an example: for example, for instance

Say the result: as a result, as a consequence, consequently, therefore

Give a reason: for that reason

State a conclusion: to conclude, in conclusion

Summarize: to sum up, in summary

Order: first, second, third, next, last, finally

Another way to show the relationship between sentences is to join them using a subordinating conjunction (See Skill 4).

Example:

Rhonda worked very hard. She didn't get a promotion.

Although Rhonda worked very hard, she didn't get a promotion.

Questions 1 through 4 refer to the following information. Circle the number of the one best answer to each item.

(1) Family reunions are fun occasions for relatives to get together. (2) To have a successful reunion, select a date and location. (3) Make all of the necessary arrangements. (4) Plan exciting activities for everyone.

(5) Often, good times for reunions are the summer months. (6) You also might plan based upon your family's schedules. (7) If a relative who lives in Canada will be visiting at a certain time, that might be a good time to have the reunion.

(8) For the reunion itself, plan interesting activities for everyone who will be coming, including children, teens, adults, and seniors. (9) Create a play space or nursery if there will be many small children. (10) You might hire a babysitter. (11) Have everyone work together to prepare or update a family tree. (12) People at the reunion will get a better understanding of the family and its history.

Construction Shift

- ① Sentences 2, 3, and 4: To have a successful reunion, select a date and location. Make all of the necessary arrangements. Plan exciting activities for everyone.

The most effective combination of sentences 2, 3, and 4 would include which group of words?

- ① location, make all of the necessary arrangements, and plan fun activities for everyone.
- ② location, make all of the necessary arrangements, and, in contrast, plan fun activities for everyone.
- ③ location, make all of the necessary arrangements, and, for example, plan fun activities for everyone.
- ④ location, make all of the necessary arrangements, and, therefore, plan fun activities for everyone.
- ⑤ location, make all of the necessary arrangements, and, as a result, plan fun activities for everyone.

Correction

- ② Sentence 7: If a good relative who lives in Canada will be visiting at a certain time, that might be a good time to have the reunion.

Which is the best way to write the underlined portion of this sentence? If the original is the best way, choose option (1).

- ① If
- ② If, however,
- ③ If, to conclude,
- ④ If, in addition,
- ⑤ If, for example,

Correction

- ③ Sentence 10: You might hire a babysitter.

Which correction should be made to sentence 10?

- ① replace You with For example, you
- ② replace You with First, you
- ③ insert also after You
- ④ replace might with mite
- ⑤ replace babysitter with babysiter, furthermore

Revision

- ④ Sentence 12: People at the reunion will get a better understanding of the family and its history.

Which is the best way to write the underlined portion of this sentence? If the original is the best way, choose option (1).

- ① People
- ② First, people
- ③ Last, people
- ④ As a result, people
- ⑤ For example, people

What Is an Essay?


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An **essay** is a written composition on a specific subject. The ideas in an essay are organized and have a beginning, middle, and end.

The **GED Essay Scoring Guide** is used by raters to evaluate GED essays. A complete copy of the Scoring Guide is on page x.

Tip

The best way to learn to write an essay is by writing essays. In this section of *Top 50 Writing Skills for GED Success*, you will write 19 essays.

 You should have a special notebook in which you write and keep your essays. This symbol lets you know that you will be writing in your notebook.

The GED Essay

An important part of the GED test is the **essay**. According to the **GED Essay Scoring Guide**, in an effective essay, the “reader understands and easily follows the writer’s expression of ideas.”

In addition, a good essay fully develops its ideas with “specific and relevant details and examples.” In order to do this, a GED essay needs to be several paragraphs long—usually five. In this section, you will begin by examining sentences and one-paragraph essays. Then you will move to three- and five-paragraph essays. By the end of this section, you will be ready to write an effective GED essay.

What Is an Essay?

An essay is more than a group of sentences. An essay

- is on a specific subject
- has organized ideas
- has a definite beginning, middle, and end
- is written in complete sentences and paragraphs
- has good spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Example:

Topic

What is your favorite free-time activity?

In your essay, state your favorite free-time activity. Give reasons to explain your choice. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

My favorite free-time activity is watching movies. I love watching movies because I can escape into new worlds. I like many different kinds of films. For example, I love exciting action movies with car chases and explosions. But I also like detective films and romances. However, comedies are my favorite. Whether it’s a classic Laurel and Hardy film from the 1930s or the latest hit from Hollywood, I’ll be laughing and enjoying myself. Movies are a fun form of entertainment that give me hours of pleasure.

Why Is This an Essay?

- ✓ It’s on a specific subject: a favorite activity, the movies.
- ✓ The ideas are organized. The writer tells why he or she likes movies and mentions his or her favorite movies.
- ✓ It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The writer states the topic, gives details, and ends with a conclusion.
- ✓ It’s written in complete sentences in one paragraph.
- ✓ It has good spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Check Your Knowledge

Is it an essay? Write **yes** or **no** on the lines.

- _____ ① a list of things to buy at the supermarket
- _____ ② a newspaper editorial
- _____ ③ a company newsletter
- _____ ④ a letter to your U.S. senator expressing your opinion on a subject
- _____ ⑤ a book on the history of war in Iraq
- _____ ⑥ an e-mail to a friend inviting her to the movies
- _____ ⑦ a notice explaining changes to your company's insurance plans
- _____ ⑧ a paragraph about your grandfather's life for a book on your family history

Practice

Three writers wrote one-paragraph essays on this GED topic: **What's your most memorable free-time event? Review their work. Did they write good essays? Check the boxes.**

- ① Last year, went to the Superbowl. It was really exciting because it's an important football game, and I love football. We saw and did many things:
Went to the SUPERBOWL!!!
Got autographs from three famous football players
Had fun at a big party before the game
Our team scored three times. We won!
HOORAY!!! I hope our team wins next year, too. Now I want to go to the superbowl everyyear. I also want to go to the world Series, but my favorite team never wins. That's the Chicago Cubs.

- ☐ It's on a specific subject.
- ☐ The ideas are organized.
- ☐ It has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- ☐ It's written in complete sentences in one paragraph.
- ☐ It has good spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

- ② A few years ago, a special concert took place in our city. Over 25 famous singers performed. I got to see Madonna, Prince, U2, Sting, and Elton John. The concert lasted from 4:00 in the afternoon until midnight, and all of the money went to help fight hunger in poor countries. My favorite part of the concert was the end. For the last song, all of the performers sang together. The audience held hands and sang, too. The concert was a great way to help others and have fun at the same time.

- ☐ It's on a specific subject.
- ☐ The ideas are organized.
- ☐ It has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- ☐ It's written in complete sentences in one paragraph.
- ☐ It has good spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

- ③ My most memorable free-time event was taking our children to Disneyworld. When they were finally old enough, my wife and I announced that we were going to Disneyworld as soon as school was out. We were all thrilled with the Disney resort, and we loved riding the monorail. Space Mountain and Pirates of the Caribbean were our favorite rides, so we enjoyed them several times. When it was time to head home, we agreed that this was our best vacation ever.

- ☐ It's on a specific subject.
- ☐ The ideas are organized.
- ☐ It has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- ☐ It's written in complete sentences in one paragraph.
- ☐ It has good spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Write

Name some topics you want to write about.

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____
- ④ _____

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As you learned in Skill 31, an essay is written on a specific subject. When you take the GED, you will find out the topic by reading the **writing prompt**. According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay “presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.” A GED writing prompt has two parts:

- question
- instructions

Example:

Topic

Why do you want to get your GED? ← **Question**

Instructions → In your essay, explain why you have decided get your GED. Give reasons to explain your decision. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

The **writing prompt** states the topic your essay should address. An effective GED essay should “present a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.”

Tip

When you take the GED or a GED practice test, read the writing prompt first. Then answer the multiple-choice questions. That way, items for the essay may come to you as you work on the multiple-choice items. When 45 minutes are left, begin the essay. Then the topic will already be familiar to you.

The **question** gives you a clear idea of the topic your essay should address. The topic of this essay is why you want to get your GED. The **instructions** indicate the type of information your essay should contain. In this case, your essay should provide the reasons behind your goal. GED writing prompts might ask you to

- describe someone or something
- tell what happened
- give reasons to explain something
- tell how to do something

The prompt also tells you that you do not need special knowledge to write a good essay. The instructions always tell you to “use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge.” But what if you don’t know anything about the topic? For example, a writing prompt might ask you to name your favorite sport. However, you hate all sports. In that case, write an essay giving reasons why you don’t like sports.

Read this writing prompt. Write **question** next to the question and **instructions** next to the instructions. What is the topic? What kind of information does the topic ask for?

Topic

What’s the most important experience of your life?

In your essay, state your most important experience. Tell what happened and explain why that experience was so important. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Read the statements. Write *true* or *false* on the lines.

- _____ ① A good GED essay does not have to address the topic.
- _____ ② The topic is the subject of your essay.
- _____ ③ You never have to give reasons when you write a GED essay.
- _____ ④ You don't need special knowledge to write a good GED essay.
- _____ ⑤ If you don't know much about the topic in the writing prompt, you can write about another topic.
- _____ ⑥ A GED writing prompt has a question and instructions.
- _____ ⑦ In some GED essays, you will describe someone or something.
- _____ ⑧ An effective GED essay needs to have a main idea.

Practice

Read the GED writing prompts. Write the topic on the line. Then explain how you will answer. Should your essay describe, tell what happened, give reasons, or tell how to do something?

Topic

Is it important to vote?

In your essay, state whether you think it's important to vote. Give reasons to back up your opinion. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

① Topic: _____

How you will answer: _____

Topic

Everyone has a favorite food.

In your essay, describe one or two of your favorite foods. What are they like? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

② Topic: _____

How you will answer: _____

Topic

Everyone has an exceptionally good day from time to time.

In your essay, name a recent good day. Tell what happened and explain why that day was so good. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

③ Topic: _____

How you will answer: _____

Write

Look at the topics you wrote on page 81. How would you answer them? Would you describe, tell what happened, tell how to do something, or give reasons? Write the answers on the lines below.

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

To write a good GED essay, you need to have plenty of good ideas about the topic. According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay has “specific and relevant details and examples.” You will need to have enough ideas for a four- or five-paragraph essay. In order to have enough ideas, it’s a good idea to spend a few minutes gathering ideas before you start to write. One good way to gather ideas quickly is **brainstorming**. When you brainstorm, you write a list of as many ideas as possible as quickly as you can. Follow these guidelines to brainstorm effectively:

- Write in words and phrases, not sentences, to save time.
- Don’t worry about spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.
- Focus on gathering as many ideas as you can.

Example:**Topic**

Most people have a best friend.

In your essay, identify your best friend. Explain why that person is your best friend. What are the person’s qualities and traits that make him or her such a good friend? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Here is the list Juan created when he brainstormed:

Best friend—Miguel Rodriguez

friendly
has same values—hard work, honesty
likes the same sports—swimming, playing soccer
likes the same weekend activities—watching soccer, dancing
likes the same soccer team, go to games together
helps me—last week gave me bus fare when I lost my wallet, gives me
a ride to work every morning
good relationship with my family—he and my parents like each other

Brainstorming is a way to gather ideas for an essay. When you brainstorm, write many ideas as quickly as possible. Write a list of words and phrases. Don’t worry about spelling or other mistakes. Just get your ideas down on paper so you can use them when you write your essay.

Tip

After you brainstorm, review your idea list. Make sure that all of the ideas are related to the essay topic.

Review Juan’s list of ideas. Add one or two ideas of your own to the list.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

These people are writing GED essays. Are they brainstorming correctly? Write *yes* or *no* on the line.

- _____ ① Frank is checking each word in his electronic dictionary.
- _____ ② Pearl is writing her ideas in a list.
- _____ ③ Jeff is taking 45 minutes to complete his list.
- _____ ④ José is really worried about correct grammar while writing his list.
- _____ ⑤ Margie is writing in complete sentences.
- _____ ⑥ Tom finished his list in six minutes.

Practice

- ① Read the GED essay topic. Brainstorm a list of ideas.

Topic

What are the characteristics of a good parent?

In your essay, identify the characteristics of a good parent. Why are these characteristics important? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Review your brainstormed list. Did you brainstorm well? Check the boxes.

- ☐ I wrote my ideas in a list.
- ☐ I wrote quickly.
- ☐ I wrote in words and phrases.
- ☐ I didn't worry about spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.

Write

Read the GED essay topic. Brainstorm a list of ideas.

Topic

Each of us is influenced by many people. Who was your biggest influence?

In your essay, identify the person who influenced you the most. How did the person influence you? Why did the person influence you so strongly? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, a good GED essay “consistently controls sentence structure.” In a good GED essay, all of the sentences are complete. A **complete sentence**

- has a subject and a verb
- expresses a complete thought and can stand alone
- begins with a capital letter and ends with a period

Examples:

William bought a new car.

- *William* is the subject and *bought* is the verb.
- The sentence expresses a complete thought and can stand alone.
- It begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

His old car hadn't been running well.

- *His old car* is the subject and *hadn't been running* is the verb.
- The sentence expresses a complete thought and can stand alone.
- It begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

A **complete sentence** has a subject and a verb, is a complete thought, and can stand alone. A complete sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

Tip

Are your sentences complete? To check, underline each subject once and the verb twice. Be sure each sentence makes sense alone. Then check for capital letters and periods.

Writing Complete Sentences

Example:

Look at Maria's idea list below. The ideas are for an essay on the topic, “What makes a good neighbor?” One of the ideas is crossed off. Which one? Why?

Maria also wrote a sentence about each of the items in the list. Look at the idea list and sentences.

great neighbor—Carla Chen
quiet
keeps home clean and nice
shovels sidewalks in winter
cuts grass in summer
friendly and polite
beautiful flowers and bushes
~~other neighbors have a mean dog~~

I have a great neighbor,
Carla Chen.

Her family is quiet.

She keeps her home clean and nice.

Her sons shovel the sidewalks in winter.

Her sons cut the grass in summer.

Her family is friendly and polite.

She has beautiful flowers and bushes.

Add another idea to the list. Then write a complete sentence.

Check Your Knowledge

Trini wrote sentences about the topic on page 86, too. Underline the subject once and the verb twice.

- ① I have a great neighbor, Carmen Mendoza.
- ② Carmen is very friendly.
- ③ Sometimes we spend hours talking.
- ④ Her home is always beautiful.
- ⑤ She has beautiful flowers in her garden.
- ⑥ She's very helpful.
- ⑦ Carmen always checks on our oldest neighbor, Ms. Espinoza.
- ⑧ Carmen babysits for me when I have to work late.

Practice

- ① Review the list of ideas you wrote on page 85. Write a sentence for each item on the list.

- ② Review the sentences you wrote. Check the boxes.

- ☐ Each sentence has a subject.
- ☐ Each sentence has a verb.
- ☐ Each sentence expresses a complete thought.
- ☐ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- ☐ Each sentence ends with a period.

Write

- ① Read the GED essay topic below. Brainstorm a list of ideas.

Topic

What are the characteristics of a good boss?

In your essay, describe the characteristics of a good boss. Why is it important to have a good boss? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Review your list of ideas. Cross off any ideas that are not related to the main idea of your essay.

The Paragraph

An essay can consist of one paragraph or several. A **paragraph**

- is a group of sentences on a specific subject
- has a **topic sentence** (which gives the main idea of the paragraph), several **body sentences** (which give details and examples about the main idea), and a **concluding sentence** (which sums up the paragraph)
- begins on a new line and is indented at the beginning (begins slightly farther to the right of the margin than the other lines)

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences on a specific topic. It has a beginning, middle, and end, and the first line is indented.

The **topic sentence** is usually the first sentence of a paragraph. The topic sentence is general and states the main idea of the paragraph.

Tip

A good paragraph should have a topic sentence that expresses its main idea and several body sentences to back up the main idea.

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective essay

- presents a clearly focused main idea
- establishes a clear and logical order
- has specific and relevant details and examples

Example:

Topic

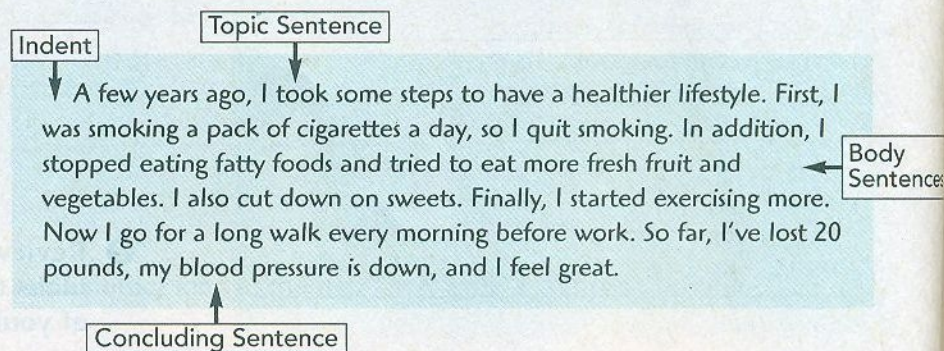
Explain a decision you made that has changed your life.

In your essay tell what your decision was and explain how it has changed your life. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Here is an idea list that Linda created:

have a healthier life
exercise more
quit smoking
stop eating fatty foods
cut down on sweets
will feel better
lose weight (lost 20 pounds)

Using her idea list, Linda wrote the following essay:



The Topic Sentence

An effective paragraph usually begins with a topic sentence. The **topic sentence** is a general statement that contains the main idea of the paragraph.

A good way to write your topic sentence is to look at the writing prompt and your idea list. Use them to write a general statement about the topic of your essay.

Here is the topic sentence Linda wrote. Notice that her topic sentence is a direct response to the topic given: "a decision you made that has changed your life."

A few years ago, I took some steps to have a healthier lifestyle.

The **body sentences** are specific. They back up the topic sentences.

The Body Sentences

Body sentences give examples and details about the main idea of the essay. The body sentences are more specific than the topic sentence.

Here are the body sentences Linda wrote. Notice that she gives five examples or details about the healthier lifestyle she has adopted (quit smoking, stopped eating fatty foods, eat more fruit and vegetables, eat less sweets, and exercise more).

First, I was smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, so I quit smoking. In addition, I stopped eating fatty foods and tried to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. I also cut down on sweets. Finally, I started exercising more. Now I go for a long walk every morning before work.

The Concluding Sentence

An effective paragraph ends with a **concluding sentence**. It sums up the information in the body.

Linda concluded her paragraph this way. This sentence is the conclusion, or the result, of her move toward a healthier lifestyle.

So far, I've lost 20 pounds, my blood pressure is down, and I feel great.

The **concluding sentence** sums up the information in the body sentences.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Read the paragraph and answer the questions.

A healthful meal should be low in fat and contain plenty of fresh, natural ingredients. For example, last night I served my family chicken tacos. The tacos were filled with spicy chicken and plenty of lettuce, tomatoes, and chopped onions. In addition, I served some refried beans and some Mexican rice. For dessert, we had fresh grapes. My husband and kids loved everything, and I was happy because everything was good for them.

- 1 What is the main idea of the paragraph?

- 2 What is the topic sentence? Underline it.
- 3 How many details support the main idea?

- 4 Write two of the supporting details on the lines.
① _____



② _____

- 5 What is the concluding sentence? Underline it.

Practice

- 1 Put the sentences below in order. Write TS next to the topic sentence. Write CS next to the concluding sentence. Then number the body sentences from B1 to B3.

- _____ Still others enjoy treating themselves to a favorite food such as a pizza or a burger and fries.
- _____ If we watch our diets, we don't have to eat sensible foods all the time—sometimes we can splurge on a favorite food.
- _____ Some people really enjoy chocolate as a splurge.
- _____ So even if you are watching your diet, leave some room for an occasional treat.
- _____ Other people enjoy salty snacks, such as potato chips or tortilla chips.

- 2  In your notebook, write the sentences above in order in the form of a paragraph.
- 3  Review the list of ideas you wrote in Skill 34 on page 87. Use your list to write a paragraph in your notebook. Make sure that your paragraph has a topic sentence that states the main idea. Also, be sure that each of the body sentences supports the main idea, and that you have a strong concluding sentence.

Write

- 1** Read the GED essay topic, and brainstorm a list of ideas.


Topic

Everyone has a favorite way to exercise.

What is your favorite way to exercise?

Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

- 2 Review your idea list. Make sure all of the ideas are related to the essay topic. Cross off ideas that are not related. If your list seems short, add more ideas to the list.
- 3  Use your idea list to write a paragraph in your notebook. Make sure you have a topic sentence, body sentences, and a concluding sentence.
- 4 Review your paragraph and check the boxes.

My paragraph

- ☐ begins on a new line
- ☐ has an indentation at the beginning (begins slightly farther to the right of the margin than the other lines)
- ☐ is on a specific topic
- ☐ has a topic sentence
- ☐ has several body sentences to support the topic sentence
- ☐ has a concluding sentence

Many GED writing prompts will ask you to describe something. When you describe, you tell what something is like. A GED writing prompt might ask you to describe a person, place, thing, or feeling. You may see these clue words in the writing prompt:

describe define characteristics traits

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay has “a clear and logical organization.” After you brainstorm ideas for an essay, organize the ideas. A good way to organize your ideas is by numbering them in order. Here are some of the ways to order the ideas in a **descriptive essay**:

- most to least important or least to most important
- top to bottom or bottom to top
- smallest to largest or largest to smallest

Tip

When you describe, use verbs such as *is*, *are*, *looks like*, *sounds like*, *seems like*, *feels*, and the simple present tense (*have*, *has*).

Example:

Look at the writing prompt. What words tell you that this essay involves description? Circle them.

Topic

What are the characteristics of a good neighborhood?

In your essay, describe the characteristics of a good neighborhood. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Here is Susan's idea list. She has numbered her ideas in the order of least important to most important to her. Then Susan has used her idea list to write a one-paragraph essay.

4. stores and a supermarket nearby
1. clean—not a lot of trash in the streets
5. quiet
2. plenty of parking
6. safe—feel secure when leave the house, never worry about kids
3. near a bus stop—kids take the bus to school

I'm lucky because I live in a good neighborhood. I never find litter on the street. There is plenty of parking, which is important because I have a car. We live near a bus stop so my kids can take the bus to school. Our neighborhood has stores and a supermarket nearby. It is always peaceful and quiet. Above all, I always feel secure when I leave the house, and I never have to worry about my kids. I'm glad I found a home in my neighborhood, and I hope I never have to move away.

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37

When you write an essay, you want to use specific, descriptive words that will make your writing come alive for the reader. The GED Essay Scoring Guide says that an effective GED essay has “varied and precise word choice.” How can you make sure that your essay meets this requirement? After you write your essay, review your **word choice**. Follow these suggestions:

- **Nouns:** A noun is a person, place, or a thing. Use nouns that refer to specific examples and individuals.
She ate **dessert**. She ate a **chocolate-macadamia cookie**.
- **Verbs:** The verb states the action of the sentence. Use action verbs that convey the precise meaning of what you want to say.
She **ate** the cookie. She **gobbled up** the cookie.
- **Adjectives and Adverbs:** Adjectives describe nouns. Adverbs describe verbs and adjectives. Use precise, colorful adjectives and adverbs to make your descriptions specific and detailed.
She ate a **good** cookie.
She ate a **rich and chewy** cookie.
She gobbled up a cookie **quickly**.
She gobbled up a cookie **in two seconds flat**.

Look at the difference when all of the changes are put together:

Original sentence: She ate dessert.

Revised sentence: She gobbled up a rich and chewy chocolate-macadamia cookie in two seconds flat.

A good time to check your word choice is after you finish writing your essay. Take a few minutes to read your essay. In the real GED test, you don’t have time to write two drafts, so just cross off and add words.

Example:

Read the paragraph. Look at how Renata improved the word choice.

My favorite drink is green tea. A cup of it ^{a refreshing cup of} ~~is~~ ^{tastes} good any time of day.
Doctors say that green tea is good for you. ^{r health} ~~Experts~~ ^{Health} also say that people
who drink green tea live longer than people who ~~don't drink it~~ ^{drink black tea or coffee}.
But the best part of drinking green tea is the taste—it is very good.

Look at the last sentence. Can you improve the word choice?

Tip

After you write your essay, review your word choice. Be sure to use specific nouns and verbs along with colorful, descriptive adjectives and adverbs. If necessary, make changes to your essay.

Check Your Knowledge

Read the sentences below. Improve the word choice by using specific nouns and verbs along with colorful adjectives and adverbs. Write your revised sentences on the lines.

- ① Mr. Chun made a nice sandwich for lunch.

- ② The fresh air smells good.

- ③ She drove to the store quickly.

- ④ He read an interesting book.

- ⑤ I need a new shirt for winter.

- ⑥ It's raining hard right now.

- ⑦ Going to the movies is fun.


- ⑧ His kitchen is a mess.

Practice

Review the essay you wrote in your notebook for Skill 36. Pay attention to your word choice. Cross off and add words to improve the word choice. Check the boxes below.

- ☐ Uses specific nouns and verbs
- ☐ Uses colorful adjectives and adverbs
- ☐ Has a topic sentence, several body sentences, and a concluding sentence

Write

- ①  Read the GED writing prompt. Brainstorm a list of ideas on the lines below. Then write a paragraph in your notebook.

Topic

What is your favorite place?

In your essay, describe your favorite place. Tell what the place looks like and why you like it so much. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Review your paragraph. Cross off and add words to improve the word choice. Check the boxes below.

- ☐ Uses specific nouns and verbs
- ☐ Uses colorful adjectives and adverbs
- ☐ Has a topic sentence, several body sentences, and a concluding sentence

38

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay has “specific and relevant details and examples.” The body sentences should have plenty of ideas that **support** the main idea expressed in the topic sentence. All of the ideas should be **relevant**: they should be related to the main idea. But sometimes, unrelated or irrelevant ideas can get into your idea list or essay. There are several ways to avoid this problem:

- After you brainstorm, review your idea list. Make sure all of the ideas are about the main idea. Cross off any idea that isn't relevant. Then make sure you have enough ideas for an essay.
- After you finish writing your essay, review your work. Check that all of the sentences are about the main idea. Cross off any sentence that isn't relevant. Then make sure that you have enough ideas. Add ideas to your essay, if necessary.

Example:

Read Tim's idea list for an essay on favorite pets.

My cat Ellen

clean
friendly
quiet
greets me when I come
home from work

rich, dark brown fur
beautiful purr
afraid of strangers
~~dogs annoy me~~

An idea that is **relevant** tells about the main idea of your essay. In a good GED essay, all of the ideas should be relevant.

Tip

Always review your idea list to make sure the ideas are relevant. After you write your essay, review it to make sure all the ideas are still relevant.

One of the ideas in the list was not relevant, so Tim crossed it off. Add another idea to the list that is relevant.

Now read Mary's one-paragraph essay about her favorite pet.

My dog Coco is my best friend. She is a light gray mutt. She loves to play with her toys and with our other dogs. But Coco is also a good guard dog. If a stranger comes near our house, she will bark to warn us. But if you know Coco, she is friendly and loyal. She always waits by the door for my children to come home from school. I am home alone a lot during the day, but I never feel lonely because Coco keeps me company. ~~I usually stay busy cooking and cleaning until it's time to go to work.~~ We have two other dogs, but Coco is my favorite.

One of the sentences in the paragraph was not relevant, so Mary crossed it off. Add another sentence that is relevant.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Read the idea lists below. The main idea is underlined. Cross off the ideas that are not relevant to the main idea. Then add another idea that is relevant.

- ① Fish are great pets.
colorful and exotic
easy to care for
fun to watch
don't make noise or disturb people
can get sick and die easily
-

- ② Dogs have many roles.
watch dogs
some dogs are very lazy
help blind people
care for animals—sheep dogs
provide friendship for people
-

- ③ Exotic pets can cause problems.
alligators can get large
snakes can escape
lizards are hard to care for
ferrets can bite
dogs are very friendly
-

- ④ My parrot is an unusual pet.
beautiful green color
cats like to catch birds
likes to fly around the house
tries to escape from her cage
she can talk
-

Practice

Review the essay you wrote in your notebook for Skill 37. Are all of the sentences relevant? Cross off any irrelevant sentences. Then add one more sentence that is relevant.


Write

- ① Read the GED essay topic. Brainstorm a list of ideas.

Topic

Imagine that you could have any pet you wanted. What would be your ideal pet?

In your essay, describe your ideal pet. Use specific details and examples to back up your ideas.

- ②  Review your idea list. Cross off any ideas that are not relevant. Then use your idea list to write a paragraph in your notebook.

- ③ Review your paragraph, and check the boxes. Add or cross off words to improve your essay.

- ☐ All of the ideas are relevant.
☐ The ideas are in the correct order.
☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, body sentences, and a concluding sentence.

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay should have “a clear and logical organization.” **Narration** is one way to organize an essay. Narration tells what happened in the past. When you narrate, your ideas are in **chronological order**. (Chronological order means arranged in the order of time.) History books, newspaper articles, and stories use chronological order.

Often, certain words in the writing prompt will tell you that your essay will use narration:

tell say what happened event past

Example:

Read the GED essay topic. What words tell you that it involves narration? Circle them. Then read the one-paragraph essay that Jill wrote about this topic.

Narration tells what happened in the past. When you narrate, use chronological order—order your ideas by time.

Tip

When you write in chronological order, use words like *first*, *second*, *next*, *after that*, and *finally* to make the order of the events clear.

Topic

We often have good or bad days.

What day stands out in your mind as particularly good? In your essay, say what happened that made it so good. Use specific details and examples to back up your ideas.

Last week, I had a great day. First, the weather was good and traffic was light, so I was early for work. I decided to have a relaxing cup of coffee at my favorite café before work. When I got to work, my boss called me into her office. I was afraid I was in trouble. But then she told me that the assistant manager had quit and offered me the job! I was so excited I thought I was going to cry. I got a raise and have better hours, too. At lunch time, I decided to go out to eat with my friend Marlene to celebrate. On our way to the restaurant I found a \$20 bill on the ground. I split the money with Marlene. Finally, after work, I told my husband about my great day. He was really surprised, but then he had another surprise for me: He asked me if I wanted to go to Hawaii for our wedding anniversary. What a great day!


Jill wants to add one more idea to the essay. Where does it go? Draw a line.

When I got back from lunch, I had a call on my voicemail. It was my youngest son saying that he got an “A” on his math test. I felt so happy because he’d been struggling with math.

Check Your Knowledge

- 1 These sentences are from a paragraph about a bad day. Put the sentences in chronological order by numbering them from 1 to 8.

- _____ I had to work through lunch.
- _____ Then the bus was late.
- _____ First, when I got up, I stepped on my glasses and broke them.
- _____ I had to pay my landlord \$25 to come over and let me in my apartment.
- _____ After that, I had to repair them with tape.
- _____ I had a terrible day yesterday.
- _____ When I got to work, my boss yelled at me for being late.
- _____ When I got home after work, I found out I'd lost my keys.

- 2  In your notebook, rewrite the sentences in the form of a paragraph. Add a concluding sentence.

Practice

- 1 Read the GED essay topic. Brainstorm a list of ideas for a one-paragraph essay.


Topic

Describe your idea of a perfect day.

Where would you go? What would you do? In your essay, tell what would happen to make it perfect. Use specific details and examples to back up your ideas.

- 2 Review your idea list. Make sure all of the ideas are related to the main idea. Cross off any irrelevant ideas and then put your ideas in chronological order. Do you have enough ideas? Add some ideas if necessary.

Write

- 1  Use your list above to write a paragraph in your notebook.
- 2 Review your paragraph and check the boxes. Add or cross off words and sentences to improve your writing.
- ☐ The ideas are all relevant.
 - ☐ The ideas are in chronological order.
 - ☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, several body sentences, and a concluding sentence.
 - ☐ The sentences have specific nouns and verbs and colorful adjectives and adverbs.

As you have learned, an effective GED essay should have “a clear and logical organization.” One way to order your ideas is according to the steps in a process. This is called a “how-to” essay.

How-to essays tell readers how to make or do something. Many kinds of writing are organized in this way.

- an article on how to frost wedding cakes
- instructions for changing the oil in your car
- directions for using a computer
- driving directions to someone’s home

These words in the writing prompt signal that you will write a how-to essay:

steps

process

how

make

Example:

Read the GED essay topic. Circle the words that tell you to write a how-to essay. Then read the one-paragraph essay that Raphael wrote.

Topic

Everyone has a skill that he or she is particularly good at. It might be cooking, building, sewing, or something else.

In your essay, tell how to do something that you are good at. Give all the steps in the process in order. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

I am an expert at baking homemade bread. The first step is to gather all of the ingredients: flour, water, yeast, sugar, and salt. Dissolve the yeast in a little water. Combine the flour, sugar, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Then add in the yeast mixture and more water. Mix the ingredients into a smooth dough. Then turn the dough out onto the counter and knead it for about 20 minutes. Then let it rise two times in a warm location. Next, form it into a loaf, put it in a loaf pan, and let it rise again. After that, bake it for about 50 minutes. Take it from the oven and remove it from the pan. Then enjoy your delicious, homemade bread.

Raphael forgot to include the idea below. Draw a line to where it goes in the essay.

Let the bread cool completely before cutting it.

A **how-to** essay tells us the steps in a process.


Tip

When you write a how-to essay, brainstorm all of the steps. Then number them in order. When you write, use words like *first*, *second*, *next*, *after that*, and *finally* to make the order of the steps clear.

Check Your Knowledge

- ① These sentences are from a paragraph about using a new cell phone. Put the sentences in order by numbering them from 1 to 7.

- _____ After the word "Ready" appears, dial the number you want to call.
- _____ When you are finished using the phone, hold down the red on-off button until you hear another musical chime.
- _____ When the phone turns on, you will hear a short musical chime.
- _____ Turn on the phone by holding down the red on-off button.
- _____ Watch the display panel for the word "Ready" to appear.
- _____ When you are finished talking, press the red on-off button again.
- _____ Press the Talk button after you dial.

- ②  In your notebook, rewrite the sentences in the form of a paragraph.

Practice

- ① Read the GED essay topic below. Circle the words that indicate you should write a how-to essay. Then brainstorm a list of ideas for a one-paragraph essay.


Topic

What is your favorite breakfast? How do you make it?

In your essay, give the steps for making your favorite breakfast. Give all the steps of the process in order. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Review your idea list. Make sure the ideas are in the correct order. Number them in order starting with 1. Check that they are all related to the main idea.

Write

- ①  Use your list to write a paragraph in your notebook.
- ② Review your paragraph and check the boxes. Add or cross off words and ideas to improve your writing.
- ☐ All of the ideas are relevant.
 - ☐ The ideas are in the correct order.
 - ☐ All important ideas are included.
 - ☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, several body sentences, and a concluding sentence.
 - ☐ The sentences have specific nouns and verbs and colorful adjectives and adverbs.

Giving Reasons

Many GED writing prompts ask you to **give reasons** to explain an opinion, belief, or action. Many kinds of writing involve giving reasons:

- a newspaper editorial on reasons the government should take a certain action
- a magazine article on reasons people need to get more exercise
- an e-mail to your boss giving the reason for your request for a day off

Certain words in a GED writing prompt signal that your essay should give reasons:

explain	why	tell why
give reasons	because	how

When you give reasons, you usually organize your ideas in order of importance. You can order your ideas:

- from least important to most important, or
- from most important to least important

When you **give reasons**, you explain the thinking behind an opinion, belief, or action.

Tip

When you write an essay giving reasons, use words like *first*, *second*, *next*, *finally*, and *most importantly* to show the order of importance of your ideas.

Example:

Read the GED writing prompt. What words indicate that the writer should give reasons? Circle them. Then look at the paragraph Namby wrote. Circle the words that introduce each reason he gives.

Topic

People have many different reasons for wanting a GED certificate. Why do you want to get your GED?

In your essay, give reasons for wanting a GED certificate. How will getting a GED change your life? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

There are many reasons why I want to get a GED certificate. First, I know that in order to get a promotion at my job, I have to have a high school diploma or a GED. I want to become an assistant manager some day, and a GED will help me. Second, I want to have a GED in case this company moves or closes. With a GED, it will be much easier for me to get another job. Most importantly, I want to get a GED to set an example for my kids. My son is having trouble in school. I don't want him to drop out. If he knows I am working hard to get my GED, maybe he will stay in school.

Check Your Knowledge

Read the GED writing prompts. Circle the words that indicate that your essay should give reasons.

1

Topic

Do you like large families or small families? Why?

In your essay, state whether you think large families or small families are better. Then give reasons to explain your choice. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

2

Topic

Many people prefer to live in a big city. Others like to live in a small town.

Where would you rather live, a big city or a small town? Why? What are the advantages of your choice? Give specific reasons and examples. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

3

Topic

Many people enjoy living in a house with a yard. Others enjoy the convenience of living in an apartment.

Where would you rather live, in a house or an apartment? Why? What are the advantages of your choice? Give specific reasons and examples. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.


Practice

- 1 Choose one of the topics from *Check Your Knowledge*. Brainstorm a list of ideas for a one-paragraph essay.

- 2 Check and organize your list.

- ☐ Are all of the ideas relevant? Cross off any irrelevant ideas.
- ☐ Do you have enough ideas? Add ideas if necessary.
- ☐ Are your ideas in the right order? Number them in order of importance.

Write

- 1  In your notebook, write a one-paragraph essay using your idea list from above.
- 2 After you write your essay, review it. Check the boxes below. Make any needed corrections on your first draft. Add or cross off words or sentences.
- ☐ All of the ideas are relevant.
 - ☐ The ideas are in the correct order.
 - ☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, body sentences, and a concluding sentence.

Checking the Organization

42

As you have seen before, an effective GED essay “establishes a clear and logical organization.” Here are ways to organize different types of essays:

- **Description**—describing something. Possible ways to organize a description are by importance (least important to most important), by size (smallest to largest), or by location.
- **Narration**—telling what happened. Usually, you use chronological order for narration: you tell the events in the order they happened.
- **How-to**—telling how to do something. When you use how-to order, you tell the steps in a process in the order you do them.
- **Giving Reasons**—giving reasons for something. Usually, you state your reasons in order of importance.

Follow these steps so your essay will have clear, logical **organization**:

- 1 After you brainstorm, organize the ideas in your idea list. One good way is to number them in order.
- 2 After you write your GED essay, check the organization of your sentences. Make sure you followed your plan. If necessary, reorder your ideas, add ideas, or cross off ideas.

Example:

Martha wrote this idea list and one-paragraph essay about her favorite room. When she reviewed her essay, she realized that two sentences were in the wrong place. The lines show how she changed the order of the sentences.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 5. breakfast nook | 2. island sink |
| 4. pots, pans, knives | 3. counter space |
| 1. white tiles, stove, fridge | |
| 6. storage space, pantry | |

My kitchen is my favorite room. I painted it white and put white tiles on the floor, too. The stove and fridge are white, too, so it looks very clean. It has an island sink and lots of counter space. I have plenty of nice pots and pans, and lots of nice kitchen utensils and equipment, such as sharp knives and cutting boards. My favorite part of my kitchen is the breakfast nook. I use the breakfast nook for breakfast or to have a cup of coffee when I am reading or studying. In addition, it has plenty of storage space. There are lots of shelves and cabinets, and a nice walk-in pantry where I store food and supplies.

Organization is the order in which you present ideas. In an effective GED essay, the ideas are in an order that makes sense to the reader.

Tip

When you take the GED test, you won't have time to write two drafts of your essay. So when you check the organization, draw lines or arrows to show the correct order of the sentences.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Read the essays below. Write *description*, *narration*, *how-to*, or *give reasons* on the line. One sentence in each paragraph is in the wrong order. Move it to the correct place by drawing a line.

① _____

Cleaning the kitchen after a big meal is not difficult. First, put away all of the food. If there are leftovers, pack them in plastic containers and put them in the fridge. Then gather up all the dirty dishes. Always wash the cooking pots last. Put a squeeze of dish soap in the dishpan and fill the dishpan with hot water. First, wash and rinse the glasses. Then put the silverware in the water. Wash and rinse the plates and serving bowls. Then rinse the silverware. When all the dishes are clean, wipe the counters with a sponge and pour out the dishwater. Next, sweep the floor and you are done.

② _____

Finding an apartment I could afford was not easy. In fact, it took me a month. First, I identified neighborhoods where I wanted to live. Then I checked the classified ads every Saturday morning. I saw several apartments, but they were all small or expensive, or both. Then a friend at work told me that an apartment was opening up in her building. I saw the apartment. It was small but nice, and the price was right. I moved less than three weeks later. I signed a lease right after I looked at the apartment the first time.

③ _____

Some people think it's strange, but my favorite room is the hall in my apartment. The hall is large and has doors into the living room, my bedroom, and my baby daughter's bedroom. My desk is in the hall. I study there when my baby is sleeping. That way, I am always nearby in case she cries or needs help. There is also a comfortable chair in the hall. At night I can work on my knitting there in the quiet while my husband and sons watch TV. I keep all of my materials for the GED on my desk.

Practice

- 1 Read the GED essay topic. Will you use description, narration, or how-to? First, brainstorm a list of ideas for your essay.


Topic

Most people have a favorite place to visit. What's your favorite place?

In your essay, name your favorite place and describe what it's like. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- 2 Organize your list. Number your ideas in order.

Write

- 1  Use your idea list above to write a one-paragraph essay in your notebook.

- 2 Review your essay, and check the boxes. Make any needed corrections on your first draft. Add or cross off words or sentences.

- ☐ All of the ideas are relevant.
- ☐ The ideas are in the correct order.
- ☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, body sentences, and a concluding sentence.

According to the GED Essay Scoring Guide, an effective GED essay “consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English.” **Edited American English** is the language people use in newspapers, magazines, and business writing. It is more formal than the language people use in friendly notes, e-mails to friends, or online chat. Edited American English

- uses complete sentences
- spells words correctly
- uses correct punctuation
- uses correct grammar

For a complete review of the conventions, or rules, of Edited American English, see Skills 1–30 in this book.

Mechanics is the least important part of the GED essay, so you should check these things last:

Mechanics includes spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Tip

GED candidates often worry about mechanics, but it is actually the least important part of the GED Scoring Guide. The essays that get the highest scores address the prompt, have plenty of good ideas, and are organized. Spend most of your time planning and writing your essay. When you are finished, check the organization and word choice. Check the mechanics last. Make sure all of the sentences are complete. Then check the punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

- Each sentence is complete (has a subject and a verb).
- Each sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a period.
- Proper nouns (such as names of people and places) and proper adjectives (adjectives made from proper nouns) are capitalized.
- The words are spelled correctly.
- The sentences are grammatically correct.

You should write your corrections directly on your first draft because during the GED test, you won't have time to write two drafts.

Example:

Look at how Robert corrected the mechanics in this one-paragraph essay. How many mistakes did he correct? Robert also forgot to add a period. Add the missing period.

I believe that all young ^{Americans} ~~americans~~ should serve their country in some way. When they turn ^{eighteen} ~~eighteen~~, ^{they} ~~he or she~~ should do either a year of military service or a year of public service. Young people ^{can help} ~~help~~ in hospitals, service agencies, or community organizations. This way, young people can develop a sense of patriotism. Serving other Americans can help young people become more socially ^{conscious} ~~conscious~~ and help the country solve its problems

Check Your Knowledge

Each of these sentences has a problem with mechanics. Correct the errors by adding the corrections directly to the sentence.

- ① all young people should do a year or more of public service.
- ② For example, joining the Piece Corps is a great way to serve the country.
- ③ Might want to join the military.
- ④ Joining the army or the navy great ways to serve the country and see the world.
- ⑤ young people should get benefits' for serving the country.
- ⑥ One binifit could be a year of free callege education for each year of service
- ⑦ The biggest benefit are that young people will develop a sense of Responsibility.
- ⑧ Doing a year of public service benefit the Whole Country and all of its citizens.

Practice

Review the one-paragraph essay you wrote in your notebook for Skill 42. Review the mechanics and check the boxes.

- ☐ Each sentence is complete (has a subject and a verb).
- ☐ Each sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a period.
- ☐ Proper nouns (such as names of people and places) and proper adjectives (adjectives made from proper nouns) are capitalized.
- ☐ The words are spelled correctly.
- ☐ The grammar is correct.


Write

- ① Read the GED writing prompt below. Then brainstorm a list of ideas.

Topic

People get to work in different ways. They can walk, drive, or take public transportation.

How do you like to get to work? Why? Explain your reasons with specific reasons and examples. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ②  Use your idea list above to write a one-paragraph essay in your notebook.

- ③ After you write your essay, review it.

- ☐ The ideas are all relevant.
- ☐ The paragraph has a topic sentence, several body sentences, and a concluding sentence.
- ☐ The sentences have specific nouns, dynamic verbs, and colorful adjectives.
- ☐ Each sentence is complete.
- ☐ Each sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a period.
- ☐ Proper nouns and proper adjectives are capitalized.
- ☐ The words are spelled correctly.
- ☐ The grammar is correct.

The Three-Paragraph Essay

Up to now, you have been writing one-paragraph essays. As you know, an effective GED essay “clearly addresses the prompt” and has “specific and relevant details and examples.” Usually, one paragraph is not enough to address the prompt and give enough details and examples. An effective GED essay needs more than one paragraph.

How can you move from a one-paragraph essay to a three-paragraph essay? Imagine that you are taking your one-paragraph essay and converting sentences into paragraphs.

One-Paragraph Essay	→	Three-Paragraph Essay
Topic Sentence	→	Introductory Paragraph
Body Sentences	→	Body Paragraph
Concluding Sentence	→	Concluding Paragraph

Tip

Each part of a one-paragraph essay becomes a paragraph in a three-paragraph essay.

- The topic sentence of your paragraph becomes the introductory paragraph.
- The body sentences, with more detail and a topic sentence, become the body paragraph.
- The concluding sentence becomes the concluding paragraph.

In a three-paragraph essay, each paragraph has a specific role:

- Paragraph 1—**the introduction**—states the main idea of the essay.
- Paragraph 2—**the body**—gives details and examples to support the main idea.
- Paragraph 3—**the conclusion**—sums up the details and restates the main idea.

Example:

Notice how the introduction, body, and conclusion of the one-paragraph essay have been developed into a three-paragraph essay.

One-Paragraph Essay	→	Three-Paragraph Essay
One of the best ways to stay healthy is by swimming regularly. Swimming exercises every muscle in your body. It also burns calories. Finally, swimming reduces stress because it's so relaxing. For these reasons, I recommend that you try swimming.	→	<p>Getting enough exercise is very important. Exercise helps you control your weight and keeps your heart healthy. One of the best exercises is swimming.</p> <p>There are several reasons why swimming is a good exercise. First, swimming exercises every muscle in your body. You use your arms, legs, and shoulder and back muscles as you swim. Second, swimming burns calories which will keep your weight down. Finally, swimming is relaxing. Whether you are young or old, swimming is an enjoyable workout that won't stress you out.</p> <p>As you can see, swimming builds your body, burns calories, and lowers stress. For these reasons, swimming is an excellent exercise. I recommend that you give swimming a try.</p>

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Write *introduction*, *body*, or *conclusion* on the line.

- ① The _____ provides examples and illustrations that back up the main idea.
- ② The _____ summarizes the essay and states the main idea again.
- ③ The _____ tells readers what the essay will be about.

Practice

Read the paragraphs of the three-paragraph essay. Then write *introduction*, *body*, or *conclusion* before the correct paragraph.

By following these simple guidelines, you will have a heart-healthy diet. This diet will also help you keep your weight down. Try it and see how much better you feel!

There are several guidelines you need to follow in order to have a healthful diet. First, get plenty of whole grains. Switch to whole grain bread, pasta, and cereal. Avoid white flour. Second, get plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables every day. Have smaller servings of meat. Eat lean meat and avoid fried foods. Finally, avoid sweets.

In order to stay healthy, people need to be careful about what they eat. A lot of salt, fat, and calories can cause health problems. A diet low in fat and high in whole grains, fruit, and vegetables can be very good for your health.

Write

- ① In the next three skill lessons, you will be writing introduction, body, and concluding paragraphs for a three-paragraph essay. Read the topic below and brainstorm an idea list.

Topic

Having a successful party takes lots of planning. Tell how you would plan a party.

Where would you hold the party? What would you have for food and entertainment? Give specific details and examples. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Check and organize your list.

- ☐ Are all of the ideas relevant? Cross off any irrelevant ideas.
- ☐ Do you have enough ideas for a three-paragraph essay? Add ideas if necessary.
- ☐ Are your ideas in the right order? If necessary, number them in order of importance.

The Introductory Paragraph and Thesis Statement

The first paragraph of a three-paragraph essay introduces the topic of the essay. The **introductory paragraph**

- tells the reader what the essay will be about
- builds interest
- prepares the reader for the information to come in the body paragraph

Usually, the first paragraph begins with a general statement and becomes more specific. The last sentence of the introductory paragraph is very specific. It states the main idea of the essay and indicates the kind of information that will come in the body paragraph. This sentence is called the **thesis statement**. The thesis statement

- is specific
- states the main idea of the essay
- tells the reader exactly what will come in the rest of the essay

Example:

Here is the introductory paragraph of the three-paragraph essay from Skill 44 on page 108:

Getting enough exercise is very important. Exercise helps you control your weight and keeps your heart healthy. One of the best exercises is swimming.

Which sentence is the most general? The most specific? The thesis statement is "One of the best exercises is swimming."

Now review the body paragraph of the essay. Does the thesis statement do a good job of introducing the information that appears in the body paragraph?

There are several reasons why swimming is a good exercise. First, swimming exercises every muscle in your body. You use your arms, legs, and shoulder and back muscles as you swim. Second, swimming burns calories which will keep your weight down. Finally, swimming is relaxing. Whether you are young or old, swimming is an enjoyable workout that won't stress you out.

Each sentence in the body paragraph supports the idea in the thesis statement.

The **thesis statement** is the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. This specific sentence states the main idea of the essay. It indicates the kind of information that will come later in the body paragraph.

Tip

After you write your essay, check the thesis statement. If necessary, change it so it exactly matches the content of the body paragraph.

Check Your Knowledge

What should an introductory paragraph do?
Check the boxes.

- ☐ build interest in the essay
- ☐ have a thesis statement
- ☐ tell people how long the essay will be
- ☐ be organized from general to specific
- ☐ be organized from specific to general

Practice

1 The sentences below are the general statements for introductory paragraphs in three-paragraph essays. Write a thesis statement for each essay.

- ① Hobbies are a great way to have fun. Hobbies are also great ways to pass time. I have several hobbies, but collecting stamps is my favorite.
- _____
- _____

- ② Many people keep pets. People also keep many kinds of pets. There are many reasons why people like to keep pets.
- _____
- _____

- ③ Pastimes are fun ways to spend time. Most people have one or more pastimes.
- _____
- _____


- ④ We have many tasks we need to do to keep our houses clean and orderly. But we like some of them more than others. For example, some people hate ironing, but others hate cleaning the bathroom.
- _____
- _____

- ⑤ There are many makes and models of cars to choose from. Some people might want a sleek sports car. Others might want a roomy SUV for transporting a large family.
- _____
- _____

2 Review your thesis statements and check the boxes. Correct your thesis statements if necessary.

- ☐ The thesis statement gives the main idea of the essay.
- ☐ The thesis statement is specific.
- ☐ The thesis statement indicates the kind of information that will come in the body paragraph.

Write

1  Look at the list of ideas you brainstormed in Skill 44 on page 109. What will be the main idea of your three-paragraph essay? Write it on the line. Then write an introductory paragraph for your essay in your notebook.

Main Idea: _____

2 Review your introductory paragraph and check the boxes.

- ☐ The paragraph starts with general statements and becomes more specific.
- ☐ The paragraph ends with a thesis statement.
- ☐ The thesis statement gives the main idea of the essay.
- ☐ The thesis statement is specific.
- ☐ The thesis statement indicates the kind of information that will come in the body paragraph.

Writing Body Paragraphs

The **body paragraph** gives specific examples and details to support the main idea of your essay. If you take the time to gather and organize your ideas, writing the body paragraph will be easy.

A good body paragraph

- begins with a **topic sentence** which states the main idea of the paragraph
- contains specific details to support the main idea of the essay

In a three-paragraph essay, the topic sentence of the body paragraph is usually a more specific version of the thesis statement (the last sentence of the introduction).

Example:

Review the introduction and body paragraph of the essay from Skill 44.

Introduction

Getting enough exercise is very important. Exercise helps you control your weight and keeps your heart healthy. One of the best exercises is swimming.

There are several reasons that swimming is a good exercise. First, swimming exercises every muscle in your body. You use your arms, legs, and shoulder and back muscles as you swim. Second, swimming burns calories, which will keep your weight down. Finally, swimming is relaxing. Whether you are young or old, swimming is an enjoyable workout that won't stress you out.

Body Paragraph

The **body paragraph** is the second paragraph of a three-paragraph essay. A good body paragraph gives plenty of examples and details to support the main idea of the essay.

Tip

Begin a body paragraph with a topic sentence that tells what the body paragraph will be about.

Notice that the topic sentence is more specific than the thesis statement.

Thesis statement: One of the best exercises is swimming.

Topic sentence: There are several reasons that swimming is a good exercise. (more specific)

The thesis statement states the main idea of the essay, "One of the best exercises is swimming."

The topic sentence in the body paragraph is more specific than the thesis statement. The topic sentence clearly indicates that in the body paragraph, the reader will find reasons stating why swimming is good exercise.

The rest of the body paragraph contains details and examples. Review the body paragraph. How many reasons does it give? There are three reasons.

Notice the words that point out each reason: *first*, *second*, and *finally*.

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

1 What do these terms mean? Write a short definition on the each line.

① introductory paragraph: _____

② body paragraph: _____

③ thesis statement: _____

④ topic sentence: _____

2 Where do these sentences go? Write *introduction* or *body* on the line.

_____ ① general statements to get readers' attention

_____ ② the thesis statement

_____ ③ specific examples to support the main idea

_____ ④ the topic sentence

Practice

Read the body paragraphs. Write a topic sentence for each one.


1 _____

First, mix the flour, salt, and baking soda. Then beat the egg lightly. Add the milk to the egg and mix. Add the egg and milk mixture to the dry ingredients and mix. Pour the pancake batter onto a hot griddle. Turn the pancakes when bubbles appear on the top. Serve the pancakes with warm syrup or honey.

2 _____

First, camping is not an expensive vacation. Fees at most parks are just a few dollars a night. You also don't need a lot of special equipment. You just need a tent and a sleeping bag. On a camping vacation, you can really get in touch with nature. You can hike, fish, and enjoy beautiful scenery. Finally, camping is a great way to get in touch with your family. The time you spend together around the campfire or hiking in the woods will give plenty of opportunities to talk about your family's hopes and dreams.

Write

1  Review the idea list you made in Skill 44 (page 109) and the introductory paragraph you wrote in your notebook in Skill 45 (page 111). Use your idea list to write the body paragraph for your three-paragraph essay.

2 Review your body paragraph and check the boxes.

- ☐ The body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph.
- ☐ The body paragraph contains specific details and examples that support the topic sentence.
- ☐ The supporting ideas are all relevant to the main idea.

Writing Concluding Paragraphs

The last paragraph of a three-paragraph essay is the **conclusion**. The purpose of the conclusion is to sum up the essay and present your final thoughts to the reader. A good final paragraph

- restates the main idea of the essay
- summarizes the information in the essay
- provides the reader with a final thought or generalization about the subject of the essay

Usually, the conclusion is organized from specific to general, moving from a restatement of the main idea to your final thought about the topic.

Example:

Introduction

Getting enough exercise is very important. Exercise helps you control your weight and keeps your heart healthy. One of the best exercises is swimming.

There are several reasons why swimming is a good exercise. First, swimming exercises every muscle in your body. You use your arms, legs, and shoulder and back muscles as you swim. Second, swimming burns calories which will keep your weight down. Finally, swimming is relaxing. Whether you are young or old, swimming is an enjoyable workout that won't stress you out.

Body Paragraph

As you can see, swimming builds your body, burns calories, and lowers stress. For these reasons, swimming is an excellent exercise for everyone. I recommend that you give swimming a try.

Conclusion

The **concluding paragraph** is the last paragraph in an essay. A concluding paragraph restates the main idea, summarizes the information in the body, and provides a final thought to the reader.

Tip

A good way to start a concluding paragraph is by summarizing the body paragraph in a single sentence. Another good way to start a concluding paragraph is by restating the thesis statement.

Each of the sentences in the concluding paragraph has a specific role:

Summarizes the information in the body: "As you can see, swimming builds your body, burns calories, and lowers stress."

Restates the main idea: "For these reasons, swimming is an excellent exercise for everyone."

Provides a final thought: "I recommend that you give swimming a try."


GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge


Write *introduction*, *body*, or *conclusion* on the line.

- _____ ① leaves the reader with a generalization or final thought about the topic
- _____ ② gives examples and details
- _____ ③ starts the essay with a general statement about the topic
- _____ ④ begins with a topic sentence
- _____ ⑤ is organized from general to specific
- _____ ⑥ restates the main idea of the essay
- _____ ⑦ ends with a thesis statement
- _____ ⑧ summarizes the information in the essay
- _____ ⑨ is organized from specific to general

Practice

- 1  Review the introductory paragraph and the body paragraph you wrote in your notebook for Skills 45 and 46. Now write the concluding paragraph for your three-paragraph essay in your notebook.
- 2 Review your concluding paragraph. Check the boxes.
 - ☐ The concluding paragraph restates the main idea of the essay.
 - ☐ The concluding paragraph summarizes the information in the essay.
 - ☐ The concluding paragraph is organized from specific to general.


Write

- 1  In this exercise, you will write a complete three-paragraph essay. First, read the topic and brainstorm a list of ideas in your notebook. Organize your idea list and make sure that all of the ideas are relevant.

Topic

Some people believe that talking on cell phones should be banned in public places. Do you agree?

In your essay, state whether talking on cell phones should be banned in public places. Why do you think so? Give reasons to support your answer. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- 2  Use your idea list to write a three-paragraph essay in your notebook. Make sure your essay has introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs.
- 3 Review your essay and check the boxes.
 - The Introduction
 - ☐ is organized from general to specific
 - ☐ ends with a thesis statement that gives the main idea of the essay
 - The Body
 - ☐ begins with a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph
 - ☐ contains specific details and examples that support the topic sentence
 - ☐ contains only relevant ideas
 - The Conclusion
 - ☐ restates the main idea of the essay
 - ☐ summarizes the information in the essay
 - ☐ is organized from specific to general

Writing Longer Essays

As you have seen, an effective GED essay “achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.” Usually, a three-paragraph essay is not long enough to completely explain the details and examples of the topic. In general, an effective GED essay will have five paragraphs.

- the introductory paragraph with the thesis statement
- three body paragraphs, each with a topic sentence
- the concluding paragraph

When you brainstorm and organize ideas for a five-paragraph essay, you should put your ideas into logical groups. Each of these groups will become one of the paragraphs in your essay.

Example:

Look at how Miguel brainstormed and organized ideas for a five-paragraph essay on the topic of favorite free-time activities.

A **multi-paragraph essay** has more than one paragraph. An effective GED essay is usually five paragraphs long.

Tip

After you create your idea list, organize it into three groups, one for each of the body paragraphs of a five-paragraph essay.

Topic

What is your favorite free-time activity?

In your essay, name your favorite free-time activity and explain why you enjoy it. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

playing baseball
great exercise
fresh air
fun

1.

watching sports
football, baseball, tennis, soccer

going bowling
good exercise
fun on winter nights

you can bowl, visit with friends, and enjoy snacks

2.

3.

watch games on TV
listen to games on radio in car
watch my sons' baseball games
always go to sons' games

GED Readiness

Check Your Knowledge

Below is an essay on a favorite free-time activity. Read the essay and match the letter of the part of the essay with its title.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ____ Introductory paragraph | ____ Topic sentence 2 |
| ____ Thesis statement | ____ Body paragraph 3 |
| ____ Body paragraph 1 | ____ Topic sentence 3 |
| ____ Topic sentence 1 | ____ Concluding paragraph |
| ____ Body paragraph 2 | |

- E** Almost everyone has some favorite free-time activities. My favorite free-time activities help me have fun and stay in shape. I like sports, so all of my free time activities involve sports. My favorite free-time activities are playing baseball, watching sports on TV, and going bowling.
- I** I love to play baseball. I play in the young women's league at my local park. Each Saturday from June to September we play another team from the league. We get plenty of fresh air, exercise, and fun while we play.
- F** I not only play sports, I watch sports. I love to watch football, baseball, tennis, and soccer on TV and in person. If there is a game on TV and I am at home, I am probably watching it. If I am driving, and a game is on, I will listen on the radio. I also get tickets to watch my local baseball team play at home. But my favorite games to watch are the ones my sons play in. My youngest two sons play Little League baseball, and my oldest son is on the high school baseball team.
- D** Finally, I have another favorite sport, bowling. I am in a winter bowling league, and my friends and I go bowling every Thursday night from 7 to 9 P.M. Bowling is my favorite sport because while we play we can talk and enjoy our favorite foods from the snack bar!
- C** As you can see, I really love watching and playing sports. I have lots of fun and always enjoy myself. I recommend that everyone play a sport of some kind.

Practice

Read the GED writing prompt and the idea list. Organize the idea list into three groups, one for each body paragraph in a five-paragraph essay.



Topic

People are always developing new skills.

Think of something you learned to do recently. What was the skill? Why did you learn it? How has learning this new skill helped you? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

learned to drive
needed to learn because I moved to
Los Angeles
now can drive to work
can drive kids to school, too
had to learn other new skills
pumping gas
changing a flat
in Los Angeles many people have cars
I needed to drive to work
can drive to the beach on weekends

Write

-  Write an essay on the writing prompt above. First, brainstorm a list of your own ideas in your notebook. Organize your idea list into three groups (one for each of the body paragraphs) and make sure that all of the ideas are relevant.
-  Use your idea list to write a five-paragraph essay in your notebook. Make sure your five-paragraph essay has an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

Raising Your Score: Content and Organization

GED test takers often wonder how they can raise their scores on the GED essay test. The most important factors in scoring well on the GED essay are

- “coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples”
- “a clear and logical organization”
- “a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt”

Two ways to raise your score are ensuring you have plenty of supporting details and a clear organization.

Support

To ensure you have enough support in your GED essay, try these techniques as you brainstorm:

- Ask and answer the five *wh*-questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?*
- Consider each of the five senses: *sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell*. Ask questions such as, “What does it look like? What does it sound like?”

An **idea map** is a way to gather and organize your ideas at the same time. You will save time because when you finish brainstorming, your ideas will already be organized.

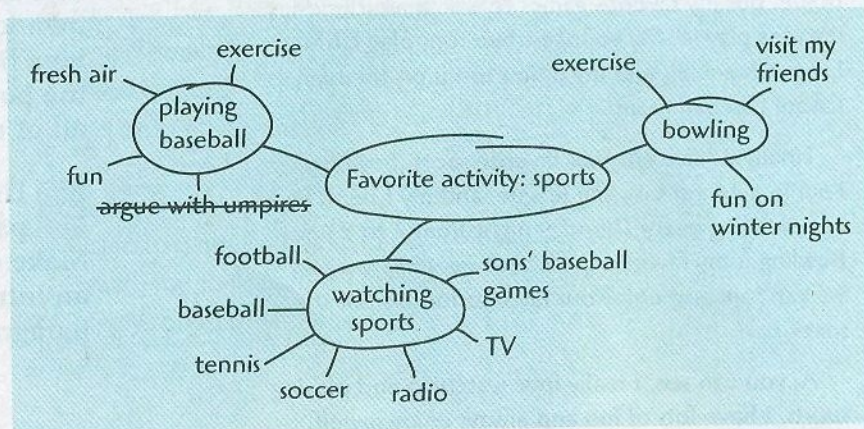
Tip

After you gather ideas, always check your idea map or idea list to ensure that all the ideas are relevant to the main idea. Cross off any ideas that are not relevant.

Organization


Another way to organize your ideas is to use an **idea map** while you brainstorm. When you use an idea map, you write the main idea in the center of your paper. Then you write related ideas around the main idea. This way, you will be organizing your ideas as you gather them. Then all you need to do is ensure that your ideas are divided into three main groups: one for each of the three body paragraphs of your five-paragraph essay.

Example:



How many ideas are in the idea map? Use the *wh*-questions or the five senses to add one or two more ideas to the idea map.

Check Your Knowledge

 Read the GED writing prompt. Then brainstorm an idea list below or make an idea map in your notebook. Gather enough ideas for a five-paragraph essay.

Topic


Everyone wants to improve their lives.

What improvements do you want to make to your life? Do you want a better education? A better job? More time with your family? In your essay, state the improvement you want to make and why you want to make it. Then tell how you will make the change. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Practice

- 1 Review the ideas in your idea list or map. Use the *wh*-questions or the five senses to add more ideas.
- 2 Review your idea list or map again. Ensure that all of the ideas are relevant. Cross off any ideas that are not relevant.

Write

- 1  Use your idea list or map to write a five-paragraph essay in your notebook.
- 2 Review your essay and check the boxes.

Check the content.

- ☐ Your essay has plenty of support.
- ☐ All of the ideas are relevant to the main idea.

Check the organization.

- ☐ Your ideas are in a logical order.
- ☐ You wrote a five-paragraph essay with an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.
- ☐ The introductory paragraph has a thesis statement.
- ☐ Each body paragraph has a topic sentence.
- ☐ The concluding paragraph restates the main idea and summarizes your main points.

Raising Your Score: Sentence Structure

50

Another way to raise your GED essay score is to use longer, more complicated sentences. Using these two sentence patterns can help raise your score:

- compound sentences
- complex sentences

Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** consists of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. An independent clause has a complete subject and verb and can stand alone as a sentence. A coordinating conjunction is a word such as *and* that joins the two clauses.

Coordinating Conjunctions

and but or for nor yet so

Examples:

He won the lottery. He moved to a larger house.
He won the lottery, **so** he moved to a larger house.

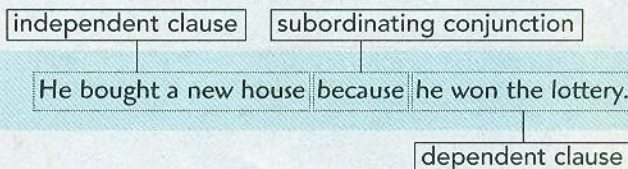
She sold her car. She didn't buy a new one.
She sold her car, **but** she didn't buy a new one.

Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** consists of an independent clause and a dependent clause joined together by a subordinating conjunction. A dependent clause has a complete subject and verb but cannot stand alone as a sentence. It must be joined to an independent clause. A subordinating conjunction is a word such as *because* that joins the two clauses into a single sentence.

Subordinating Conjunctions

although because before (even) though after
if unless when while since



Examples:

He will buy a new house **if** he wins the lottery.
He will buy a new house **when** he wins the lottery.

A **compound sentence** consists of two independent clauses joined with a word like *and*, *but*, *or*, or *so*.

A **complex sentence** consists of an independent clause and a dependent clause joined with a word such as *if*, *because*, *when*, *while*, or *unless*.

Tip

Use a comma when you join **independent clauses** to form a compound sentence.

Example:

He won the lottery, so he moved to a larger house.


When you form a **complex sentence**, use a comma only if the dependent clause comes first.

Example:

I'll move to New York if I win the lottery. (no comma)

If I win the lottery, I'll move to New York. (has a comma)

Check Your Knowledge

 Join the following sentences using the words in parentheses. Write your answers in your notebook.


- ① I had a lot of fun last weekend. I got a lot of work done, too. (and)
- ② On Saturday morning, I cleaned the kitchen and bathroom. I didn't vacuum. (but)
- ③ I was washing the dishes. The phone rang. (when)
- ④ My brother was calling. He wanted to go to the mall with me. (because)
- ⑤ He wanted me to go to the mall with him. He needed to buy a new suit. (since)
- ⑥ I didn't have any plans for the afternoon. I went with him to the mall. (so)
- ⑦ He didn't want to buy a suit. It was on sale. (unless)
- ⑧ We bought him a nice suit on sale. We went to a restaurant for dinner. (after)
- ⑨ On Sunday, I studied for the GED. I got ready for work on Monday. (and)
- ⑩ On Sunday night, I read a magazine. My children were doing their homework. (while)

Practice

Review the essay you wrote for Skill 49 in your notebook. Check the boxes. Make any necessary corrections by writing the changes directly on your first draft.

- ☐ Compound sentences increase the sophistication of your writing.
- ☐ Complex sentences increase the sophistication of your writing.


Write

- ①  Read the GED writing prompt. Then brainstorm an idea list or create an idea map. Gather enough ideas in your notebook for a five-paragraph essay.

Topic

What did you do on your last day off?

Think about your most recent day off. What did you do that day? Did you do housework? Catch up on your studies for the GED? Have fun with your friends or family? In your essay, tell what you did on your most recent day off. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

- ② Review the ideas in your idea list or map. Use the *wh*-questions or the five senses to add more ideas to your idea map. Then ensure that all the ideas are relevant. Cross off any ideas that are not related to the main idea.
- ③  Use your idea map to write a five-paragraph essay in your notebook.
- ④ Review your essay. Check the boxes. Make any corrections necessary by writing the changes directly on your first draft.

Check the mechanics.

- ☐ Each sentence is complete (has a subject and a verb).
- ☐ Each sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a period.
- ☐ Proper nouns (such as names of people and places) and proper adjectives (adjectives made from proper nouns) are capitalized.
- ☐ The words are spelled correctly.
- ☐ The grammar is correct.