



The Seven Reading Skills on the GED English Test

1. **Main Idea or Theme:** Look at the forest, not the trees. What overall idea or theme is the author trying to convey?
2. **Development (of Ideas, Events, or Characters):** The key to development questions is that the passage starts at Point A and ends at Point B. You need to follow the author's route.
3. **Language Use:** Guess an unfamiliar word's meaning from its context.
4. **Structure:** What does a part of the passage add to the author's purpose or to the development of the author's ideas?
5. **Purpose or Point of View:** For what purpose did the author write this passage? To educate? To entertain? To defend a position? Is the author positive, critical or neutral about the subject?
6. **Evaluation of the Author's Argument or Reasoning:** Judge the author's evidence, reasoning or assumptions.
7. **Comparison:** Find differences between passages with separate formats, styles and biases. Think about what's different and why.

The Qualities of a Successful Essay

Your essay can earn up to six points. It is graded for three different "traits" or qualities, and each trait is given a score of 0, 1, or 2. This is an argumentative essay, meaning you create an argument and find reasons to support it. Write a lot!

Trait 1: Creation of Argument and Reasons

- Create an argument by making a logical claim which clearly supports your position
- Use 3 or more specific references from the passages to support your claim
- Identify valid arguments and/or flawed claims
- Point out supported and unsupported claims in the passages

Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Essay Structure

- Create a well structured essay with a clear beginning, middle and end
- Tie your ideas to specific evidence from the passage
- Make transitions between ideas
- Use accurate and advanced word choice
- Use an appropriate level of formality (avoid slang, etc.)

Trait 3: Clarity and Use of Grammar

- Write sentences of different lengths
- Remember it is not a spelling test!
- Read over your paper before you submit it- if it sounds wrong, it is wrong
- Avoid wordiness and confusing sentences



Grammar 101

Capitalization: Proper nouns, proper adjectives, titles, holidays, days of the week, and months of the year are capitalized.

Comma: A comma separates a sentence into meaningful units.

- **to form a series:** I made roast chicken, mashed potatoes, and a salad for dinner.
- **after an introductory phrase:** To get to the restaurant, she had to take the bus.

Complete Sentence: A complete sentence must contain a subject, a verb, and appropriate end punctuation. A complete sentence will present a complete idea.

- Nick loved to skateboard.

Simple verbs: Verbs help make the action of a sentence happen.

- **action verbs:** expresses an action whether it be physical or mental; I *walk* to the store. Bianca *talks* to Amy. I *think* traveling the world would be fun.
- **linking verbs:** connects the subject to the rest of the sentence (am, is, are, were, was, has been, are being, to be...) I *was* afraid of spiders as a child. Rebecca *is* a wonderful student.

Contraction: A contraction is a combination of two words.

- Examples: they + have = they've, it + is = it's
- **Do not use these in your essay!**

Possession: Indicated by the use of an apostrophe to show ownership.

- for singular nouns, use an apostrophe and add s: **dog's** bone
- for most singular nouns ending in s, use an apostrophe and add s: **Mars's** moon
- for plural nouns ending in s, use only an apostrophe: **players'** meeting

Pronouns: Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. Pronouns must agree in gender and number with the nouns they replace.

- Sharon drove Keith home after work. **Replace nouns with pronouns:** She drove him home after work.

Run-on sentence: A run-on sentence occurs when two or more sentences are joined incorrectly.

- **wrong:** I met a friend at the movies we had a good time.
- **correct:** I met a friend at the movies, and we had a good time.

Subject-verb agreement: In a sentence, subjects and verbs must agree in person and number.

- **wrong:** Amber and I *am* going out to eat Friday.
- **correct:** Amber and I *are* going out to eat Friday.