

Making Everything Easier!™

GED® RLA Test

FOR DUMMIES®

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Learn:

- Methods to sharpen your reading and language skills
- How to approach the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test question types and formats
- To work through test questions with practice problems and study exercises
- How you measure up by taking a full-length practice test

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Introduction

You've decided to take the General Education Development (GED) test to earn the equivalent of a high school diploma. Congratulations! You're about to clear a major hurdle standing between you and your educational and professional goals. But now you realize that you need extra guidance in reading and writing to tackle the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Perhaps you took the test once or even twice and didn't do so well. Perhaps you've done an honest self-assessment and now realize that English was never your favorite or best subject. Whatever the reason, you need to quickly review the essentials and practice answering questions like those you'll encounter on the test. You want to know what to expect so you're not blindsided on test day.

Welcome to *GED RLA Test For Dummies* — your key to excelling on the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Here, you find everything you need to do well on the test, from guidance on how to improve reading speed and comprehension to how to analyze arguments. We also bring you up to speed on proper English conventions and usage and explain how to write a top-notch essay for the Extended Response portion of the test. Along the way, you find plenty of practice questions to reinforce your newly acquired knowledge and skills.

About This Book

As we were writing *GED Test For Dummies*, 3rd edition (Wiley), we didn't have the space to cover all four sections of the GED test in great detail. In that book, we provided a general overview of the GED test and two full-length practice tests that covered all four sections —

Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA), Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies.

Knowing that each section of the GED test can be taken separately and that test-takers probably need more guidance in some subject areas than in others, we decided to develop a separate workbook for each section — four workbooks, each with a balance of instruction and practice. In this book, we focus exclusively on the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Our goal is twofold: to prepare you to answer correctly any RLA question you're likely to encounter on the test so that you receive a high score and to help you do well on your Extended Response essay.

We begin by giving you a sneak peek at the test format and an overview of what's on the GED RLA test. We then provide a diagnostic test that presents you with RLA questions, which challenge your reading and reasoning knowledge and skills and identify your unique strengths and weaknesses. The diagnostic test and the self-assessment form following the test guide you to specific chapters for instruction and practice. When you feel ready, you can then tackle the full-length Reasoning Through Language Arts practice test in [Chapter 9](#) and turn to [Chapter 10](#) for answers and explanations. Check the answers even for questions you answered correctly because the answers do provide additional learning materials.

We wrap up with two Part of Tens chapters — one that presents ten tips to improve your reading speed and comprehension and another that helps you steer clear of ten common writing errors.

Foolish Assumptions

When we wrote this book, we made a few assumptions about you, dear reader. Here's who we think you are:

- ✔ You're serious about earning a high-school diploma or GED endorsement for existing qualifications as quickly as you can.
- ✔ You're looking for additional instruction and guidance specifically to improve your score on the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test, not the Math, Science, or Social Studies test.
- ✔ You've made earning a high-school diploma and an endorsement a priority in your life because you want to advance in the workplace or move on to college.
- ✔ You're willing to give up some activities so you have the time to prepare, always keeping in mind your other responsibilities, too.
- ✔ You meet your state's requirements regarding age, residency, and the length of time since leaving school that make you eligible to take the GED test. (See [Chapter 1](#) for details.)
- ✔ You have sufficient English language skills to handle the test.
- ✔ You want a fun and friendly guide that helps you achieve your goal.

If any of these descriptions sounds like you, welcome aboard. We've prepared an enjoyable tour of the GED test.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons - little pictures you see in the margins of this book — highlight bits of text that you want to pay special attention to. Here's what each one means:



Whenever we want to tell you a special trick or technique that can help you succeed on the GED RLA test, we mark it with this icon. Keep an eye out for this guy.



This icon points out information you want to burn into your brain. Think of the text with this icon as the sort of stuff you'd tear out and put on a bulletin board or your refrigerator.



Take this icon seriously! Although the world won't end if you don't heed the advice next to this icon, the warnings are important to your success in preparing to take the GED RLA test.



We use this icon to flag example questions that are much like what you can expect on the actual GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test. So if you just want to get familiar with the types of questions on the test, this icon is your guide.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the book content, you can find valuable free material online. We provide you with a Cheat Sheet that addresses things you need to know and consider when getting ready for the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test. You can access this material at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/gedrlatest.

We also include additional articles at www.dummies.com/extras/gedrlatest that provide even more helpful tips and advice to help you score your best on the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test.

Where to Go from Here

Some people like to read books from beginning to end. Others prefer to read only the specific information they need to know now. Here we provide a road map so you can find your way around.

[Chapter 1](#) starts off with an overview of the GED test and how to register for the exam. [Chapter 2](#) brings you up to speed on what the Reasoning Through Language Arts test covers. [Chapter 3](#) is a must-read — a diagnostic test followed by a self-assessment to target areas where you need the most guidance and practice. Based on your self-assessment, you'll know which chapters to focus on in [Part II](#) of this book.

The chapters in [Part II](#) are the meat and potatoes — instruction and practice that covers reading comprehension, argument analysis, Standard English language conventions, and writing:

- ✓ **Reading comprehension:** The RLA test is essentially an open-book test in that it provides the content on which questions are based. That said, you have to be a very good and careful reader to identify the main ideas and pick out details from the reading passages on the test. In [Chapter 5](#), we help you develop your reading comprehension skills.
- ✓ **Argument analysis:** The RLA test challenges your ability not only to read and understand the written word but also to evaluate arguments in terms of logic

and supporting evidence. In [Chapter 6](#), we explain how to pick apart arguments and separate fact from opinion.

- ✓ **English language conventions:** A significant portion of the GED RLA test presents you with writing errors in grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, and other conventions and challenges you to choose the correction. In [Chapter 7](#), we address the most common errors and explain how to correct them.
- ✓ **Extended Response:** [Chapter 8](#) turns your attention to writing. Here, you find out what the Extended Response portion of the test is all about, how to compare two passages and determine which is most effective, and how to write an essay that clearly states your point of view and supports it with plenty of evidence in a well-reasoned persuasive essay.

When you're ready to dive into a full-length practice test that mimics the real GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test, check out [Part III](#). After the test, you can check your answers with the detailed answer explanations we provide. (But be sure to wait until *after* you take the practice test to look at the answers!).

If you need a break, turn to the chapters in [Part IV](#), where you can find ten tips to improve your reading speed and comprehension and descriptions of ten writing errors to avoid.

Part I
**Getting Started with the
GED RLA Test**



For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more

with *For Dummies*.

In this part...

- ✓ Get oriented to the test format, question types, test scheduling, and scoring and find out what steps to take if English isn't your first language.
- ✓ Find out what's on the GED Reading Through Language Arts test and the knowledge and skills it requires you to demonstrate.
- ✓ Take a diagnostic test to identify your strengths and weaknesses and highlight the areas where you may need additional practice.
- ✓ Prepare for the actual test day and find out what you should or shouldn't do on the day(s) before and the day of the test, including during the exam.

Chapter 1

Taking a Quick Glance at the GED RLA Test

In This Chapter

- ▶ Warming up to the GED test format
 - ▶ Checking out what's on the GED RLA test
 - ▶ Registering for the test and choosing a test date
 - ▶ Completing the GED test when English is your second language
 - ▶ Understanding what your score means and how it's determined
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The GED test offers high-school dropouts, people who leave school early, and people who were educated outside the United States an opportunity to earn the equivalent of a United States (U.S.) high-school diploma without the need for full-time attendance in either day or night school. The GED test is a recognized standard that makes securing a job or college placement easier.

The GED test complies with current Grade 12 standards in the U.S. and meets the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The GED test also covers the Common Core Standards, used in most states in the United States. These standards are based on the actual expectations stated by employers and postsecondary institutions.

The GED test measures whether you understand what high-school seniors across the country have studied

before they graduate. Employers need better-educated employees. In addition, some colleges may be uncertain of the quality of foreign credentials. The GED provides those assurances. When you pass the GED test, you earn a high-school equivalency diploma. That can open many doors for you — perhaps doors that you don't even know exist at this point.

You're permitted to take the GED in sections, so you can take the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA), Math, Science, and Social Studies tests in separate testing sessions. This flexibility enables you to focus your studies and practice on one section of the test at a time, and this book supports your efforts to do just that.

Ready to get started? This chapter gives you the basics of the GED RLA test: how the test is administered, what the RLA test section looks like, how to schedule the test (including whether you're eligible), and how your score is calculated (so you know what you need to focus on to pass).

Knowing What to Expect: The GED Test Format

A computer administers the GED test. That means that all the questions appear on a computer screen, and you enter all your answers into a computer. You read, evaluate, analyze, and write everything on the computer. Even when drafting an essay, you don't use paper. Instead, the test centers provide you with an erasable tablet. If you know how to use a computer and are comfortable with a keyboard and a mouse, you're ahead of the game. If not, practice your keyboarding. Also, practice reading from a computer screen, because reading from a screen is very different from reading

printed materials. At the very least, you need to get more comfortable with computers, even if that means taking a short course at a local learning center. In the case of the GED test, the more familiar you are with computers, the more comfortable you'll feel taking the computerized test.



Under certain circumstances, as a special accommodation, the sections are available in booklet format. Check with the GED Testing Service to see what exceptions are acceptable.

The computer-based GED test allows for speedy detailed feedback on your performance. When you pass (yes, we said *when* and not *if*, because we believe in you), the GED Testing Service provides both a diploma and a detailed transcript of your scores, similar to what high-school graduates receive. They're now available online at www.gedtestingservice.com within a day of completing the test. You can then send your transcript and diploma to an employer or college. Doing so allows employers and colleges access to a detailed outline of your scores, achievement, and demonstrated skills and abilities. This outline is also a useful tool for you to review your progress. It highlights those areas where you did well and areas where you need further work. If you want to (or have to) retake the test, these results will provide a detailed guide to what you should work on to improve your scores. Requests for additional copies of transcripts are handled online and also are available within a day.

Reviewing the GED RLA Test

The Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) test is one long test that covers all the literacy components of the GED test. The 150-minute test is divided into three sections. First, you have 35 minutes on all content in question-and-answer format, then 45 minutes for the Extended Response (essay), followed by a 10-minute break, and then another 60 minutes for more general test items.



Time for the Extended Response can't be used to work on the other questions in the test, nor can you use leftover time from the other sections to work on the Extended Response.

Here's what you can expect on the RLA test:

- ✓ The literacy component asks you to correct text, respond to writings, and generally demonstrate a critical understanding of various passages. This task includes demonstrating a command of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- ✓ The Extended Response item, also known as "the essay," examines your skills in organizing your thoughts and writing clearly. Your response will be based on one or two source text selections, drawing key elements from that material to prepare your essay.

The essay is evaluated both on your interpretation of the source texts and the quality of your writing. You type on the computer, using a tool that resembles a word processor. It has neither a spell-checker nor a grammar-checker. How well you use spelling and grammar as you write is also part of your evaluation. You'll have an erasable tablet on which to prepare a draft before writing the final document.

- ✓ The scores from both components will be combined into one single score for the RLA test.

The question-answer part of this test consists mainly of various types of multiple-choice questions (also called items) and the occasional fill-in-the-blank question. Most items will be in the traditional multiple-choice format with four answer choices, but you'll also see drag-and-drop and drop-down menu items. For details on the different question types, see [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#).

These items are based on source texts, which are materials presented to you for your response. Some of this source material is nonfiction from science and social studies content as well as from the workplace. About 25 percent is based on literature. Here's a breakdown of the materials:

- ✓ **Workplace materials:** These documents include work-related letters, memos, and instructions that you may see on the job.
- ✓ **U.S. founding documents and documents that present part of the Great American Conversation:** These bits may include extracts from the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and other historical documents. They also may include opinion pieces on relevant issues in American history and civics.
- ✓ **Informational works:** These texts include documents that present information (often dry and boring information), such as the instructional manual that tells you how to set up an Internet connection on your tablet. They also include materials that you may find in history, social studies, or science books.
- ✓ **Literature:** These sources include extracts from novels, plays, and similar materials.

You find a variety of problems in the RLA test, including the following:

- ✓ **Correction:** In these items, you're asked to correct sentences presented to you.
- ✓ **Revision:** In these items, you're presented with a sentence that has a word or phrase underlined. If the sentence needs a correction, one of the answer choices will be better than the words or phrase underlined. If no correction is needed, either one of the answer choices will be the same as the underlined portion or one of the choices will be something like "no correction needed."
- ✓ **Construction shift:** In these types of problems, you have to correct a sentence by altering the sentence structure. The original sentence may not be completely wrong, but it can be improved with a little editing. In these cases, the question presents you with optional rewording or allows you to change the sentence order in a paragraph.
- ✓ **Text analysis:** These problems require you to read a passage and respond in some manner. It may be an analysis of the content, a critique of the style, review for biases or other influences, or responses to something in the content.

Because the computerized GED test is new and still evolving as we write this book, be sure to check out the latest and greatest about the GED test at

www.gedtestingservice.com.



If you can't wait to get started practicing for the RLA test, you may skip to [Chapter 3](#) to take a diagnostic version of the test or check out the

chapters in Part 5 that cover the skills and knowledge required in greater detail.

It's a Date: Scheduling the Test

To take the GED test, you schedule it based on the available testing dates. Each state or local testing center sets its own schedule for the GED test, which means that your state decides how and when you can take each section of the test. It also determines how often you can retake a failed section and how much such a retake will cost. Because a computer administers the test, many testing centers schedule an individual appointment. Your test starts when you start and ends when your allotted time is completed. The test centers are small computer labs, often containing no more than 15 seats, and actual testing facilities are located in many communities in your state.

You book your appointment through the GED Testing Service (www.gedtestingservice.com). Your local GED test administrator can give you all the information you need about scheduling the test. In addition, local school districts and community colleges can provide information about local test centers in your area.



Sending a specific question or request to the website may come with a charge for the service. To save money, you're better off asking a person at your local testing center. That way, you don't have to pay for the privilege of asking a question, and your answer will be based on rules and conditions specific to your area.

The following sections answer some questions you may have before you schedule your test date, including whether you're even eligible to take the test, when you can take the test, and how to sign up to take the test.

Determining whether you're eligible

Before you schedule your test, make sure you meet the requirements to take the GED test. You're eligible to apply to take the GED test only if

- ✓ **You're not currently enrolled in a high school.** If you're currently enrolled in a high school, you're expected to complete your diploma there. The purpose of the GED test is to give people who aren't in high school a chance to get an equivalent high-school diploma.
- ✓ **You're not a high-school graduate.** If you're a high-school graduate, you should have a diploma, which means you don't need to take the GED test. However, you can use the GED to upgrade or update your skills and to prove that you're ready for further education and training.
- ✓ **You meet state requirements regarding age, residency, and the length of time since leaving high school.** Check with your local GED test administrator to determine your state's requirements concerning these criteria. Residency requirements are an issue, because you may have to take the test in a different jurisdiction, depending on how long you've lived at your present address.

Recognizing when you can take the test

If you're eligible, you can take the GED test whenever you're prepared. You can apply to take the GED test as

soon as you want. Just contact your local testing center or www.gedtestingservice.com for a test schedule. Pick a day that works for you.



You can take all four sections of the GED test together. That takes about seven hours. However, the test is designed so that you can take each section separately, whenever you're ready. In most areas, you can take the test sections one at a time, in the evening or on weekends, depending on the individual testing center. If you pass one test section, that section of the GED test is considered done, no matter how you do on the other sections. If you fail one section, you can retake that section of the test. The scheduling and administration of the test vary from state to state, so check with the GED Testing Service site or your local high-school guidance office.

Because the test starts when you're ready and finishes when you've used up the allocated time, you should be able to take it alone and not depend on other people. For you, that means you may be able to find locations that offer the testing in evenings or on weekends as well as during regular business hours. Even better, because you don't have to take the test with a group, you may be able to set an individual starting time that suits you.

If circumstances dictate that you must take the paper version of the test, you'll probably have to forgo the flexibility afforded by the computer. Check well in advance to see what the rules are for you.



You can also apply to take the test if you're not prepared, but if you do that, you don't stand a very

good chance of passing. If you do need to retake any section of the test, use your time before your next test date to get ready. You can retake the test three times in a year without waiting, but after the third failed attempt you must wait 60 days. In most jurisdictions, taking the test costs money (check with your local testing center to find out specifics for your area). The GED Testing Service does offer a discounted retake up to twice a year, but these promotions change. Some states include free retakes in the price of the test. Check with the GED Testing Service or your state when ready about what special discounts may be available. To save time and money, prepare well before you schedule the test. Refer to the later section “[Knowing what to do if you score poorly on one or more tests](#)” for details.

Are special accommodations available?

If you need to complete the test on paper or have a disability that makes it impossible for you to use the computer, your needs can be accommodated. However, other specifics apply: Your choice of times and testing locations may be much more restricted, but times to complete a test may be extended. Remember also that the GED testing centers will ask for documentation of the nature of the accommodation required.

The GED testing centers make every effort to ensure that all qualified people have access to the tests. If you have a disability, you may not be able to register for the tests and take them the same week, but, with some advanced planning, you can probably take the tests when you're ready. Here's what you need to do:

- ✓ Check with your local testing center or check out www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/accommodations-for-disability.
- ✓ Contact the GED Testing Service or your local GED test center and explain your disability.
- ✓ Request any forms that you have to fill out for your special circumstances.

- ✓ Ensure that you have a recent diagnosis by a physician or other qualified professional.
- ✓ Complete all the proper forms and submit them with medical or professional diagnosis.
- ✓ Start planning early so that you're able to take the tests when you're ready.

Note that, regardless of your disability, you still have to be able to handle the mental and emotional demands of the test.

The GED Testing Service in Washington, D.C., defines specific disabilities, such as the following, for which it may make special accommodations, provided the disability severely limits your ability to perform essential skills required to pass the GED test:

- ✓ Medical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or blindness
- ✓ Psychological disabilities, such as schizophrenia, major depression, attention deficit disorder, or Tourette's syndrome
- ✓ Specific learning disabilities, including perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia

Signing up

When you're actually ready to sign up for the test, follow these steps:

- 1. Contact your local GED test administrator to make sure you're eligible.**
Refer to the earlier section "[Determining whether you're eligible](#)" for some help.
- 2. Ask the office for an application (if needed) or an appointment.**
- 3. Complete the application (if needed).**
- 4. Return the application to the proper office, with payment, if necessary.**

The fees vary state by state, so contact your local administrator or testing site to find out what you have

to pay to take the tests. In some states, low-income individuals may be eligible for financial assistance.

Note: You can also do all of this online, including submitting the payment, with your computer, tablet, or smartphone. Go to www.gedtestingservice.com to start the process.



Never send cash by mail to pay for the GED test. Most local administrators have payment rules and don't accept cash.

Working with unusual circumstances

If you feel that you may have a special circumstance that prevents you from taking the GED test on a given day, contact the GED test administrator in your area. If, for example, the test is going to be held on your Sabbath, the testing center may make special arrangements for you.



When applying for special circumstances, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- ✓ Document everything in your appeal for special consideration.
- ✓ Contact the GED test administrator in your area as early as you can.
- ✓ Be patient. Special arrangements can't be made overnight. The administrator often has to wait for a group with similar issues to gather so he can make arrangements for the entire group.

- ✓ Ask questions. Accommodations can be made if you ask. For example, special allowances include extended time for various disabilities, large print and Braille for visual impairments, and age (for individuals older than 60 who feel they may have a learning disability).

Taking the GED Test When English Isn't Your First Language

English doesn't have to be your first language for you to take the GED test. The GED test is offered in English, Spanish, and French. If you want to take the test in Spanish or French, contact your local GED test administrator to apply. Individuals who speak other languages as their first language, however, must take the test in English. If that is you, you should take a test of your English skills before taking the GED test.



If English, Spanish, or French isn't your first language, you must decide whether you can read and write English as well as or better than 40 percent of high-school graduates, because you may be required to pass an English as a Second Language (ESL) placement test. If you write and read English well, prepare for and take the test (either in English or in Spanish or French). If you don't read or write English well, take additional classes to improve your language skills until you think you're ready. An English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) is also available for people who completed their education in other countries. For more information about the

language component of the GED test, check out www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions.

In many ways, the GED test is like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) comprehension test. If you've completed the TOEFL test with good grades, you're likely ready to take the GED test. If you haven't taken the TOEFL test, enroll in a GED test-preparation course to see whether you have difficulty understanding the subjects and skills assessed on the test. GED test courses provide you with some insight into your comprehension ability with a teacher to discuss your skills and struggles.

Websites that can help you plan to take the GED test

The Internet is a helpful and sometimes scary place. Some websites are there to help you in your GED test preparation, while others just want to sell you something. You have to know how to separate the good from the bad. Here are a couple of essential ones (most are accessible through www.gedtestingservice.com):

- ✓ adulted.about.com/od/gettingyourged/a/stateged.htm is a website that links to the GED test eligibility requirements and testing locations in your state.
- ✓ usaeducation.info/Tests/GED/International-students.aspx is a site that explains GED test eligibility for foreign students.

If you're curious and want to see what's out there, type "GED test" into any search engine and relax while you try to read about 22 million results, ranging from the helpful to the helpless. We suggest leaving this last activity until after you've passed the tests. As useful as the Internet can be, it still provides the opportunity to waste vast amounts of time. And right now, you need to spend your time preparing for the test — and leave the rest for after you get your diploma.

Taking Aim at Your Target Score

To pass, you need to score a minimum of 150 on each section of the test, and you must pass each section of the test to earn your GED diploma. If you achieve a passing score, congratulate yourself: You've scored better than at least 40 percent of today's high-school graduates, and you're now a graduate of the largest virtual school in the country. And if your marks are in the honors range (any score over 170), you're ready for college or career training.



Be aware that some colleges require scores higher than the minimum passing score. If you plan to apply to postsecondary schools or some other form of continuing education, check with their admissions office for the minimum admission score requirements.

The following sections address a few more points you may want to know about how the GED test is scored and what you can do if you score poorly on one or more of the test sections.

Identifying how scores are determined

Correct answers may be worth one, two, or more points, depending on the item and the level of difficulty. The Extended Response, the essay, is scored separately. However, the Extended Response is only part of the RLA and Social Studies sections. On each test section, you must accumulate a minimum of 150 points.



Because you don't lose points for incorrect answers, make sure you answer all the items on each test. After all, a correct guess can get you a point. Leaving an answer blank, on the other hand, guarantees you a zero. The information and practice in this book provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to answer most questions on the RLA section with confidence and to narrow your choices when you're not quite sure which answer choice is correct.

Knowing what to do if you score poorly on one or more tests

If you discover that your score is less than 150 on any test section, start planning to retake the test(s) — and make sure you leave plenty of time for additional study and preparation.



As soon as possible after obtaining your results, contact your local GED test administrator to find out the rules for retaking the failed section of the test. Some states may ask that you wait a certain amount of time and/or limit the number of attempts each year. Some may ask that you attend a preparation course and show that you've completed it before you can retake the GED. Some may charge you an additional fee. However, you need to retake only those sections of the test that you failed. Any sections you pass are completed and count toward your diploma. Furthermore, the detailed evaluation of your results will help you discover areas of weakness that need more work before repeating any section of the test.

One advantage of taking the GED test on a computer is that you can receive, within a day, detailed feedback on how you did, which includes some specific recommendations of what you need to do to improve your scores.

No matter what score you receive on your first round of the section, don't be afraid to retake any section that you didn't pass. After you've taken it once, you know what you need to work on, and you know exactly what to expect on test day.

Chapter 2

Prepping for the RLA Test

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting familiar with the writing and grammar component of the RLA test
 - ▶ Developing your reading and comprehension skills
 - ▶ Gearing up to write an essay
 - ▶ Discovering strategies to help you succeed
-

The Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) test evaluates your skills in comprehending and applying concepts in grammar and writing. (*Grammar* is the basic structure of language — you know: subjects, verbs, sentences, fragments, punctuation, and all that.) Most of what you're tested on (both in writing and grammar) is stuff you've picked up over the years, either in school or just by speaking, reading, and observing, but, to help you prepare better for this test, we give you some more skill-building tips in this chapter.

The RLA test is divided into three sections. You start off with a 35-minute question-and-answer section that focuses on writing and reading comprehension, and then you spend 45 minutes writing an Extended Response (the essay). After a 10-minute break, you finish with a 60-minute question-and-answer section that presents more questions on reading and writing. The length of the two question-and-answer sections may vary slightly, but the overall time is always 150 minutes, including the 10-minute break.

In this chapter, we provide all you need to know to prepare for the RLA test and its different components. From reading everything you can to practicing your writing, grammar, and spelling to improving your reading comprehension and speed, this chapter, along with those in [Part II](#), equip you with what you need to nail the test.

Grasping What's on the Grammar and Writing Component

Although the GED test doesn't label question sets with the words *writing* or *grammar*, the concepts are worked into almost everything on the test. To pass this component of the RLA test, you need to demonstrate that you have a command of the conventions of Standard English. You need to know the appropriate vocabulary to use and avoid slang. Texting shortcuts may save you time while communicating with your friends, but they're not acceptable in formal writing. You need to be able to spell, identify incorrect grammar, and eliminate basic errors, including such common errors as run-on sentences or sentence fragments.

To help you succeed, we provide insightful information in the following sections about what skills this part of the test covers, what you can do to brush up on those skills, and how the questions are presented. With this information in hand, you can be confident in your ability to tackle any type of grammar or writing question on test day.

Looking at the skills the grammar and writing component covers

The grammar and writing component of the RLA test evaluates you on the following types of skills related to grammar. Note that unlike the other GED test sections, this component of the RLA test expects that you know or at least are familiar with the rules of grammar. Just looking at the passages provided won't do you much good if you don't understand the basics of these rules already.

- ✓ **Mechanics:** You don't have to become a professional grammarian to pass this test, but you need to know or review basic grammar. Check out [Chapter 7](#) to review what you should know or may have forgotten. The mechanics of writing include the following:
 - **Capitalization:** You have to recognize which words should start with a capital letter and which words shouldn't. All sentences start with a capital letter, but so do titles, like *Miss*, *President*, and *Senator*, when they're followed by a person's name. Names of cities, states, and countries are also capitalized.
 - **Punctuation:** This area of writing mechanics includes everyone's personal favorite: commas. (Actually, most people hate commas because they aren't sure how to use them, but the basic rules are simple.) The more you read, the better you get at punctuation. If you're reading and don't understand why punctuation is or isn't used, check with your grammar guidebook or the Internet.