

## ESSAY WRITING

**Student/Class Goal**  
Students have heard that they will have to write an essay for the GED test and are very anxious about how to even begin writing.

**Outcome** *(lesson objective)*  
Students become familiar with the GED essay scoring rubric, compose an essay using the rubric criteria and receive feedback from peers to improve their writing.

**Time Frame**  
2-4 hrs over two or three class sessions

**Standard** *Convey Ideas in Writing*

**NRS EFL 3-5**

Prewriting	Benchmarks	Drafting	Benchmarks	Editing and Revising	Benchmarks
Topic, purpose, & audience	3.1, 4.1, 5.1	Organize writing	2.10, 3.10	Reread & revise	3.18, 4.19
Writing for purpose	3.2, 4.2, 5.2	Sentences/paragraphs	3.11, 4.12	Proofread	3.19, 4.20, 5.18
Writing for various tasks	4.3, 5.3	Descriptive language	2.12, 3.12, 4.13	Feedback from others	3.20, 4.21
Generate ideas		Sentence structure	3.13, 4.14, 5.14	Checklists & rubrics	3.21, 4.22
Main idea/thesis	3.5, 4.5, 5.5	Spelling	3.14, 4.15, 5.15	<b>Publishing</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
Research		Punctuation	3.15, 4.16	Technology	
Plagiarism		Capitalization	3.16, 4.17	Publication	
Sources		Parts of speech	3.17, 4.18, 5.16		
Organize ideas	3.8, 4.9, 5.9				
Organizational pattern	3.9, 4.10				

**Materials**  
Post-it notes or index cards, tape  
GED Essay Scoring Guide (Steck-Vaughn 2002 GED Essay, p.10)  
Overhead projector  
Sample essays on overheads (Steck-Vaughn 2002 GED Essay, p. 63-74)  
White board, markers  
*Essay Self-Evaluation Form*  
Essay Writing Learning Objects

**Learner Prior Knowledge**  
The learner should have some knowledge of the writing process and will have been introduced to the standard. They should have the ability to write sentences and paragraphs with some accuracy.

**Instructional Activities**  
Step 1 - Brainstorm with the students' ideas of what elements create a good essay (purpose, audience, sentences, paragraphs, topic, good ideas, punctuation, etc.) Have the students write their ideas on post-it notes or index cards and tape them to the wall. Discuss what pieces fit together and what else is needed that might be missing. Group like ideas together as the discussion progresses. Add more ideas to the wall if necessary.  
  
Step 2 - Hand out scoring guides and review how to read them, include both columns and rows. Discuss what qualities go into each score. Draw a small rubric on the white board to use later.  
  
Step 3 – Place a sample essay from the GED essay book on the overhead. Have one volunteer read the essay aloud. Ask the students what they liked about the essay. What could have been better? Discuss each part of the rubric and decide as a group how to score the essay. As you talk about each point of the rubric, mark on the white board copy where the class consensus is. For example, if the class gives the essay a 3 for organization but a 2 for development and detail, mark at 3 and 2 on the board rubric. Once a final score is decided, look in the back of the book for the suggested answer. Discuss the rubric further if the class score does not match the book score.

**TEACHER NOTE** Create overheads in advance. Use color pens on the overhead to highlight or underline points of discussion.  
  
Repeat the same as above for other essays. Three additional essays would give students a range of different writing styles. If breaking this lesson down into several days, this would be a good stopping point for day one.  
  
Step 4 - Share sample topic ideas from the GED essay book or other classroom resources. Have students decide if they want to write on the same topic or if they would prefer to each write on their own topic. Select a writing topic.

Brainstorm ways of getting organized before starting to write – chose either [Venn diagrams](#), [semantic mapping](#), lists or outlines.

Step 5 - Have students write a 5-sentence paragraph (one thesis, 3 details, one conclusion). Then have them expand each sentence to a paragraph. Also, depending on class expertise, this could be done on overhead as a whole-group project or in small groups. Emphasize indenting paragraphs and capitalization. Students might like to use the *Essay Self-Evaluation Form* to guide them through the process.

**TEACHER NOTE** A five paragraph essay is not required for this lesson it is only one method for essays. All learner writing should not focus on the structured essay. Remember that although the logical reasoning necessary to write an essay is a life skill, essay writing itself is seldom a life-skill type of writing activity.

Step 6 - Allow the students to write for 25-30 minutes uninterrupted. If you are breaking the lesson up across days, creation of a brainstorm list and graphic organizer could be the end of day two. The essay could be assigned as homework or used to start class the next day.

Step 7 - Once the students are finished writing their essays, break them up into smaller groups. For 15-20 minutes, have them read each other's essays and use the rubric to score them. The purpose is to help the writer, not criticize. Have the readers list 3-5 ways the writer could improve the essay (organization, details, grammar, etc.)

**TEACHER NOTE** Students could write on the same topic instead of working in small groups, they could do whole group discussion and scoring with student essays on overheads.

Step 8 - Whole group discussion should follow: What was interesting? What did you learn? How will you use this to improve your writing? Was the writer receptive to the suggestions the group made?

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*

Creation of student writing sample  
Using the scoring rubric on peer writing sample  
Discussion and participation

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*I have taught this lesson several times in a correctional setting. Depending on the day and participants, I may be able to do all parts in one day. Usually, I take two sessions to complete the lesson. With guidance, the students are able to read another's essay and use the teaching points from the sample to improve their own samples. They get a more concrete feel for what detail and development, staying on topic, etc. means. Writing is a process; watch for improvement in essays over time.*

**Next Steps**

Plan for writing on a regular basis. Select teachable points from the essays to use during upcoming instruction. Essay Writing Learning Objects will give students additional practice before taking the GED Essay test.

**Technology Integration**

Venn Diagram [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/venn\\_diagrams.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/venn_diagrams.pdf)  
Semantic Mapping [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/semantic\\_mapping.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/semantic_mapping.pdf)

**Purposeful/Transparent**

Plan for writing on a regular basis. Select teachable points from the essays to use during upcoming instruction.

**Contextual**

As students continue to create essays, return to the suggestion list created just for them and check if they have made improvement in that area. Recommend that they work on the suggestions in other areas such as daily journal writing or letter writing. This would reinforce the skill in a setting other than the classroom.

**Building Expertise**

Activity builds on prior knowledge of essay writing. List of suggestions from peers will assist in building future skills.

## ESSAY SELF-EVALUATION FORM

### Before Writing

- \_\_\_\_\_ Remember the basic five-paragraph structure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organize what you want to say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remember to underline words you're not sure of so that you can go back and think about the spelling later.

### While Writing

#### Paragraph 1: Two Sentences

- \_\_\_\_\_ Answer the question in one sentence. Pretend that your reader doesn't know the question.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Combine your three main points of support into one sentence.

#### Paragraph 2: Focus on Point 1.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide general information about Point 1 in one or two sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 1 with Detail or Example 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 1 with Detail or Example 2.

#### Paragraph 3: Focus on Point 2.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide general information about Point 1 in one or two sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 2 with Detail or Example 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 2 with Detail or Example 2.

#### Paragraph 4: Focus on Point 3.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide general information about Point 1 in one or two sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 3 with Detail or Example 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Point 3 with Detail or Example 2.

#### Paragraph 5: Conclusion

- \_\_\_\_\_ Restate the answer to the question in one or two sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give your opinion.

### Proofread Your Essay

- \_\_\_\_\_ Check the length (about 200 words).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paragraphs indented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Go back to underlined words and consider spellings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check EAE conventions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Main idea addresses the prompt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Variety of word choices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cut unnecessary words, phrases and sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check for complete sentences, eliminate run-on sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check to see if subjects agree with predicates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check to see if pronouns agree with the nouns they replace.



<http://www.wisconline.org>

### **GED Essay Writing – Formula for Success**

**Author:** Laurie Jarvis

**School:** Fox Valley Technical College **Date:** 4/24/2002

**Description:** Students read about the format for a five-paragraph essay, which is the second part of the GED Writing Test.

[http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index\\_tj.asp?objID=ABC1002](http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=ABC1002)

### **Scoring the GED/HSED Essay**

**Author:** Laurie Jarvis

**School:** Fox Valley Technical College **Date:** 5/17/2002

**Description:** Students read the answers to commonly asked questions about the GED/HSED Essay and view the official scoring guide. They use this rubric in an interactive exercise to evaluate sample essays.

[http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index\\_tj.asp?objID=ABC902](http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=ABC902)

### **Writing the GED Essay – Using Transitional Words**

**Author:** Laurie Jarvis

**School:** Fox Valley Technical College **Date:** 5/20/2002

**Description:** Students study transitional words that will help to them write an effective GED/HSED Essay. In an interactive exercise, students click on the best transitional word or phrase to complete a sentence.

[http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index\\_tj.asp?objID=ABC1102](http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=ABC1102)