



GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
TESTING SERVICE

Passing the 2002 GED Test: Focused Instruction for Results in Writing

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www.GEDtest.org

A Program of the American Council on Education®



Today's Presentation

- **Part I - The Language Arts, Writing Test**
 - Content Skills tested
 - Blueprint for test construction
 - Data organization
 - Performance results
 - Teaching strategies to address test taker's difficulty with content
- **Part II - Materials for reference on essay scoring**
 - Background on the use of the four-point scale
 - Holistic Scoring Guidelines
 - The GED four-point scoring rubric
 - Scoring issues (re-calibration)

The Language Arts, Writing Test

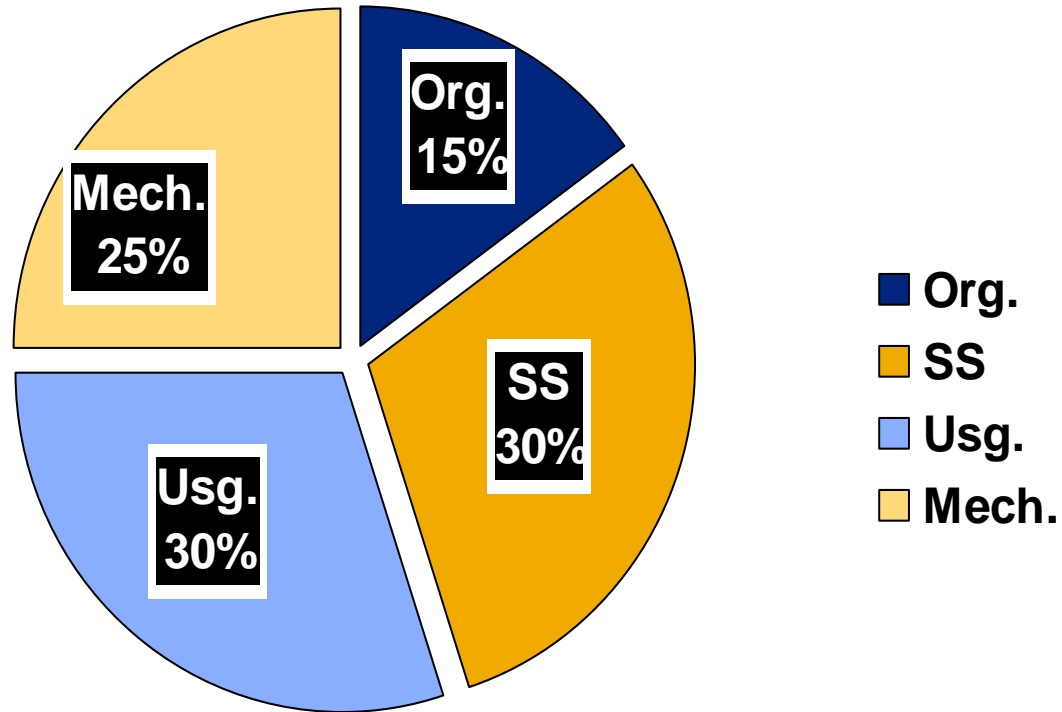
- Consists of two parts:
 - **Part I**, 50 multiple-choice items **and**
 - **Part II**, an essay.
 - **Part I** counts for 65% of the composite score, **Part II**, 35%.

Which Cognitive and Content Skills Are Tested?

- In the multiple-choice passage sets, candidates demonstrate the cognitive skills . . .
 - correcting,
 - revising, and
 - shifting constructions
- . . . in the four content skill areas . . .
 - Organization
 - Sentence Structure
 - Usage
 - Mechanics



Percentage of Content Skill Items Tested



Making an Instructional Plan from the Data



The results of candidates' performance on the content skills of the Language Arts, Writing Test provide a good starting point for preparing test takers.

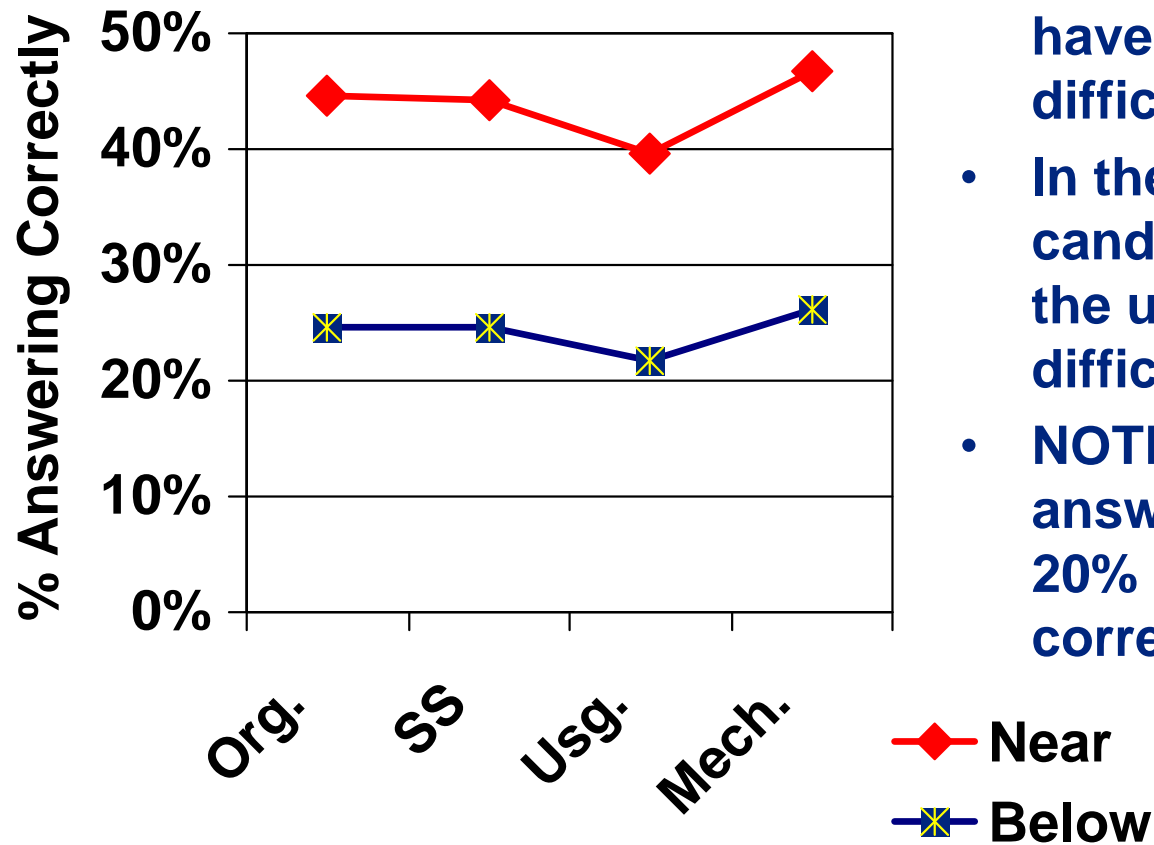
The Data

- Results were obtained from three operational test forms, nationally:
 - 2007 English IF, IG, IH (but excluded CT, IL, OH, VT due to lack of item-level data)
- The study focused on the 20 most difficult items for test takers on each of the three forms (Total 60 items).
- These items represented 40% of the total items on the three test forms (150).

The Data

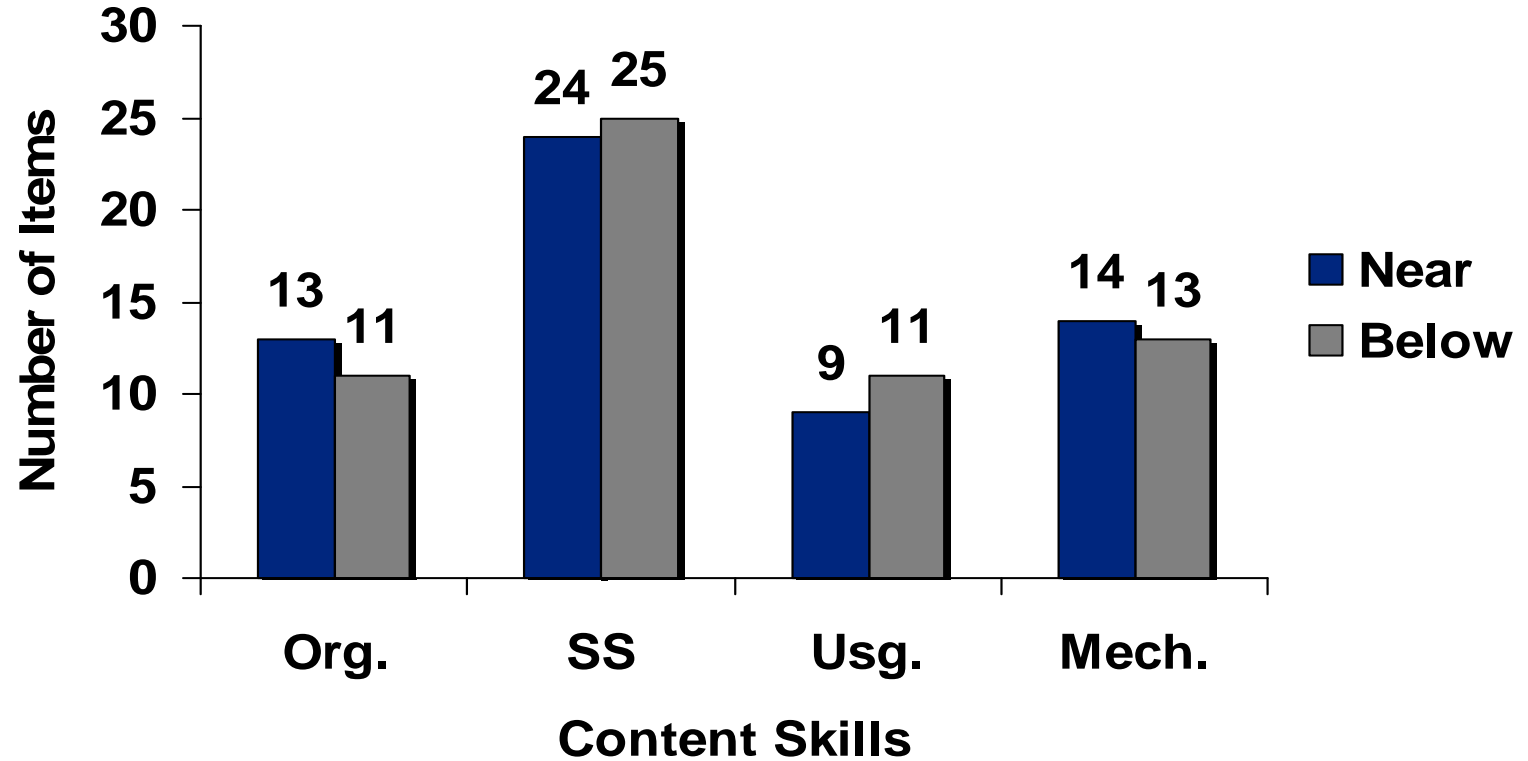
- Focus on those candidates who passed (410 standard score) +/- 1 SEM
 - The “NEAR” group (N = 136,770)
 - Within 26 to 31 std. score points of 410
- and those candidates whose standard scores were between 1 and 2 SEMs below passing
 - The “BELOW” group (N=22,562)
 - Between 27-52 and 32-62 std. score points below 410
- Then analyze responses to frequently missed questions to identify strategies for improvement
- Develop materials to implement those strategies

How Did GED® Candidates Perform?

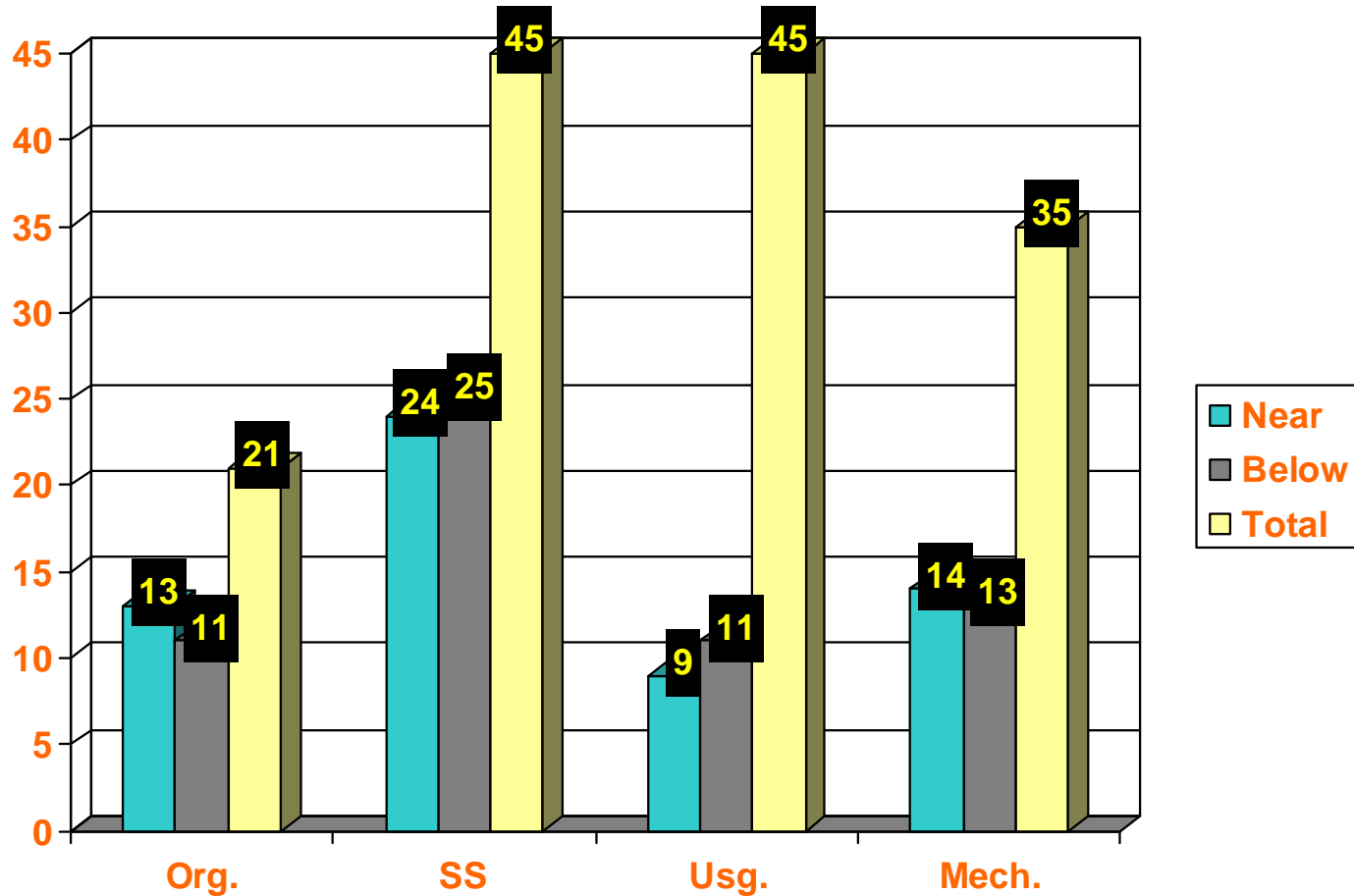


- In the Near group, candidates seemed to have the greatest difficulty with usage.
- In the Below group, candidates also found the usage skills most difficult.
- **NOTE:** The Near group answered approximately 20% more items correctly.

Number of Content Skills Items Found Most Difficult (N=60)



Comparison of Items Found Most Difficult with Total Number of Items

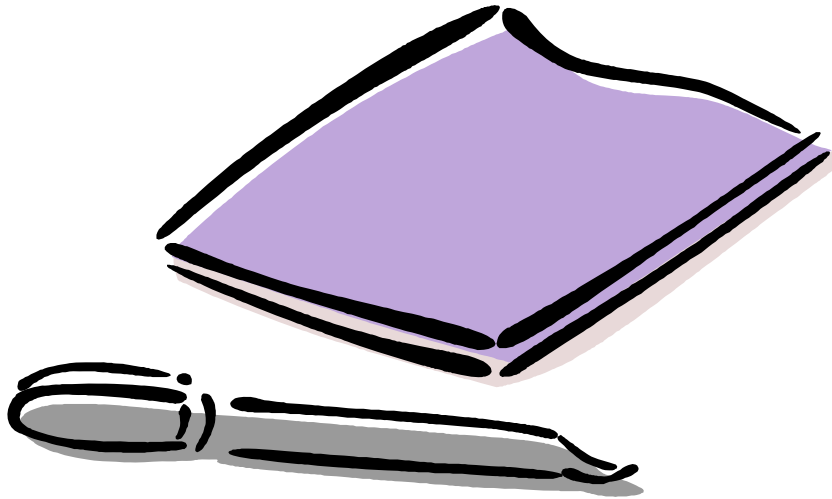


What is Organization?

- Organization is often referred to as *revision*, the manipulation of text to improve understanding, clarity, and coherence.



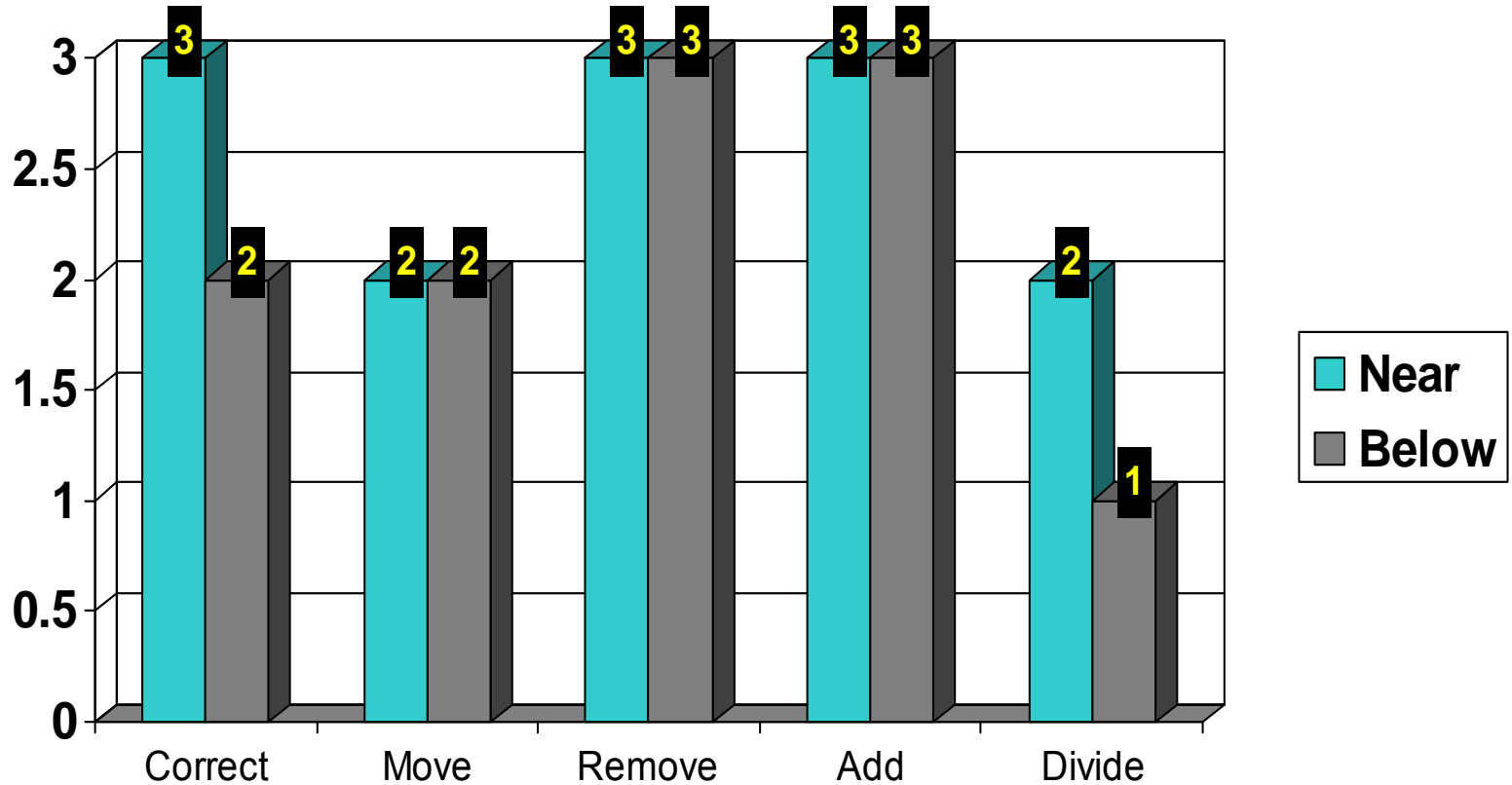
Operations in Organization



Candidates are asked to:

- Move text,
- Remove text,
- Add text, or
- Divide text.

What Types of Organization Items Did Candidates Find Most Difficult?



Adding Text

3. Which sentence would improve the effectiveness of paragraph B?
- (1) Our company contracts with many local caterers to handle our functions.
 - (2) Many of our corporate officers will be attending this function.
 - (3) To help you understand our catering needs, I am providing the following details.
 - (4) The people attending the dinner will have many dietary restrictions.
 - (5) Long term employees deserve to have a dignified retirement dinner.

Moving Text

10. Which revision would improve the effectiveness of the letter?
- (1) begin a new paragraph with sentence 2
 - (2) move paragraph C to follow paragraph A
 - (3) join paragraphs C and D
 - (4) move sentence 14 to the beginning of paragraph A
 - (5) remove sentence 16

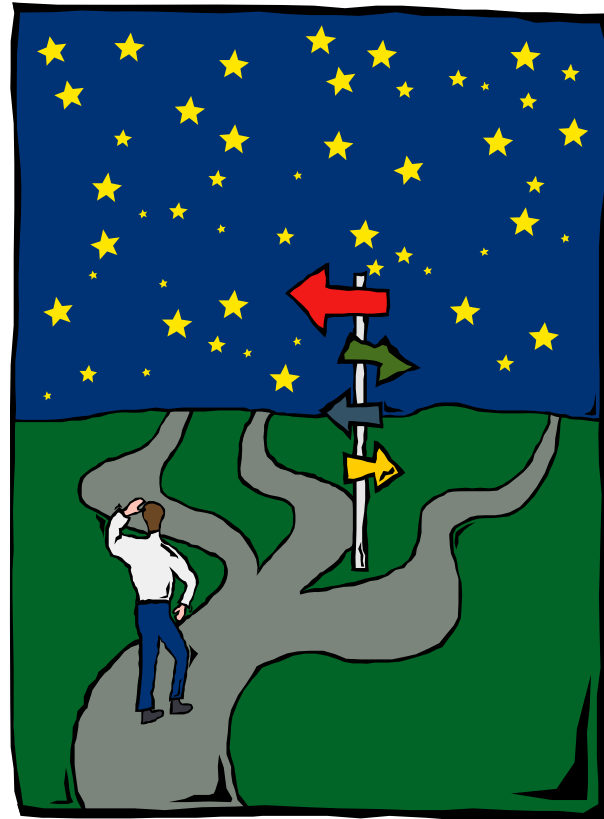
Removing Text

**2. Sentence 3: Petersburg is a very nice city.
Which revision should be made to sentence 3?**

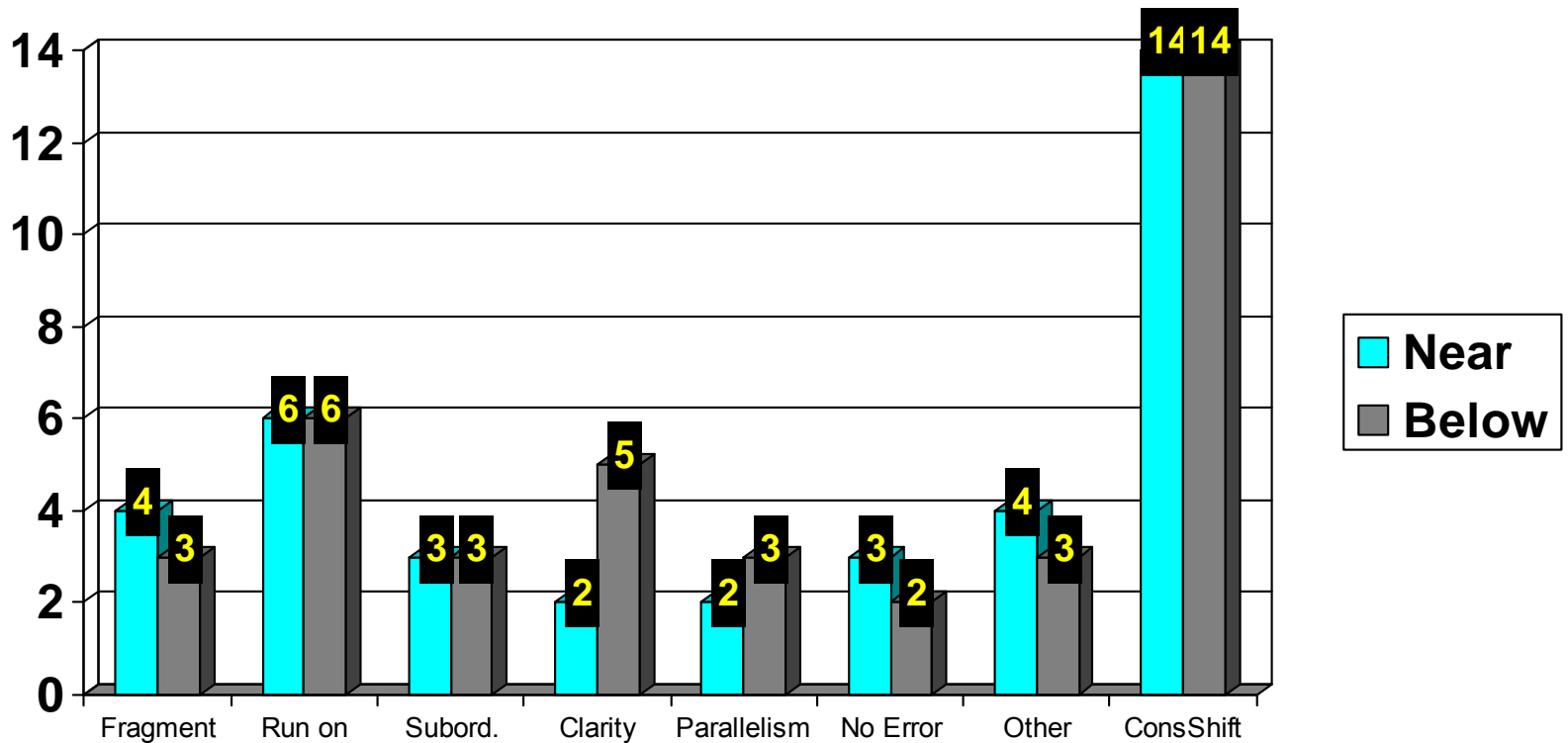
- (1) move sentence 3 to the beginning of paragraph A**
- (2) move sentence 3 to follow sentence 1**
- (3) move sentence 3 to the beginning of paragraph B**
- (4) move sentence 3 to follow sentence 7**
- (5) remove sentence 3**

What is Sentence Structure?

- A sentence has been defined as “a group of words expressing a complete thought.”
- How words come together in a sentence (syntax) helps determine the reader’s understanding of *that thought*.



What Types of Sentence Structure Items Did Candidates Find most Difficult?



Sentence Structure—Fragment

5. Sentences 7 and 8: *Beverages should be served throughout the evening. Even after dessert is served.*

Which is the best way to write the underline portion of sentences 7 and 8? If the original is the best way, choose option (1).

- (1) evening. Even after
- (2) evening and even after
- (3) evening when dessert
- (4) evening even after
- (5) evening after dessert

Resulting sentence . . .

Beverages should be served throughout the evening even after dessert is served.

Sentence Structure—Construction Shift

9. Sentence 13: *There must be availability of cream and sugar at dessert time and coffee will be served.*

If you rewrote sentence 13 beginning with

Because coffee will be served

the next words should be

- (1) there will be service
- (2) availability must be
- (3) with dessert,
- (4) and cream and sugar
- (5) dessert must be

Construction Shift—revision

Resulting Sentence

Because coffee will be served with dessert, cream and sugar must be available.

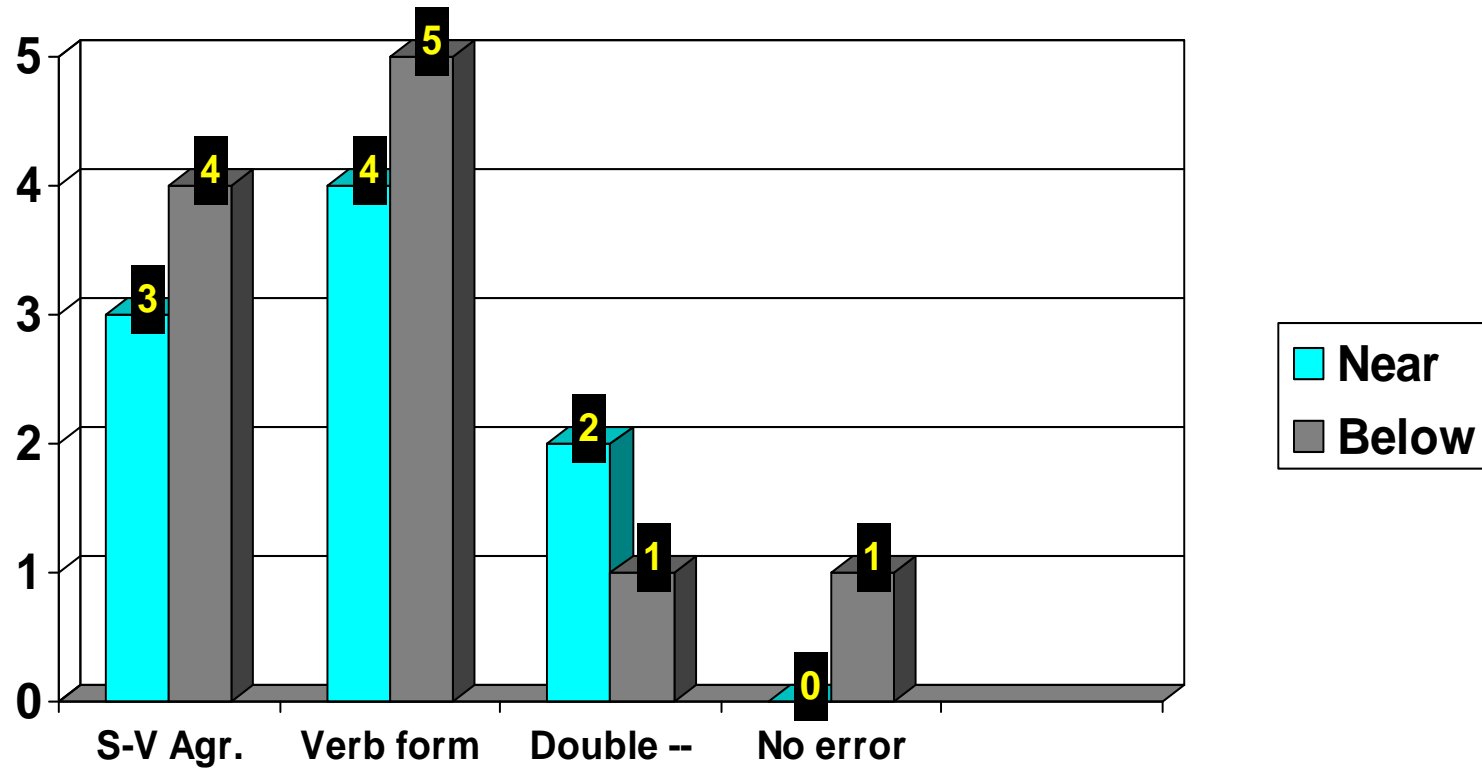
Sentence Structure—Comma Splice

Sentence 2: *We have scheduled a recognition dinner for October 7, 2008, this event will be held in the Colonial Hall Community Center in Petersburg, Virginia.*

Resulting sentence . . .

We have scheduled a recognition dinner for October 7, 2008. This event will be held in the Colonial Hall Community Center in Petersburg, Virginia.

What Types of Usage Items Did Candidates Find Most Difficult?



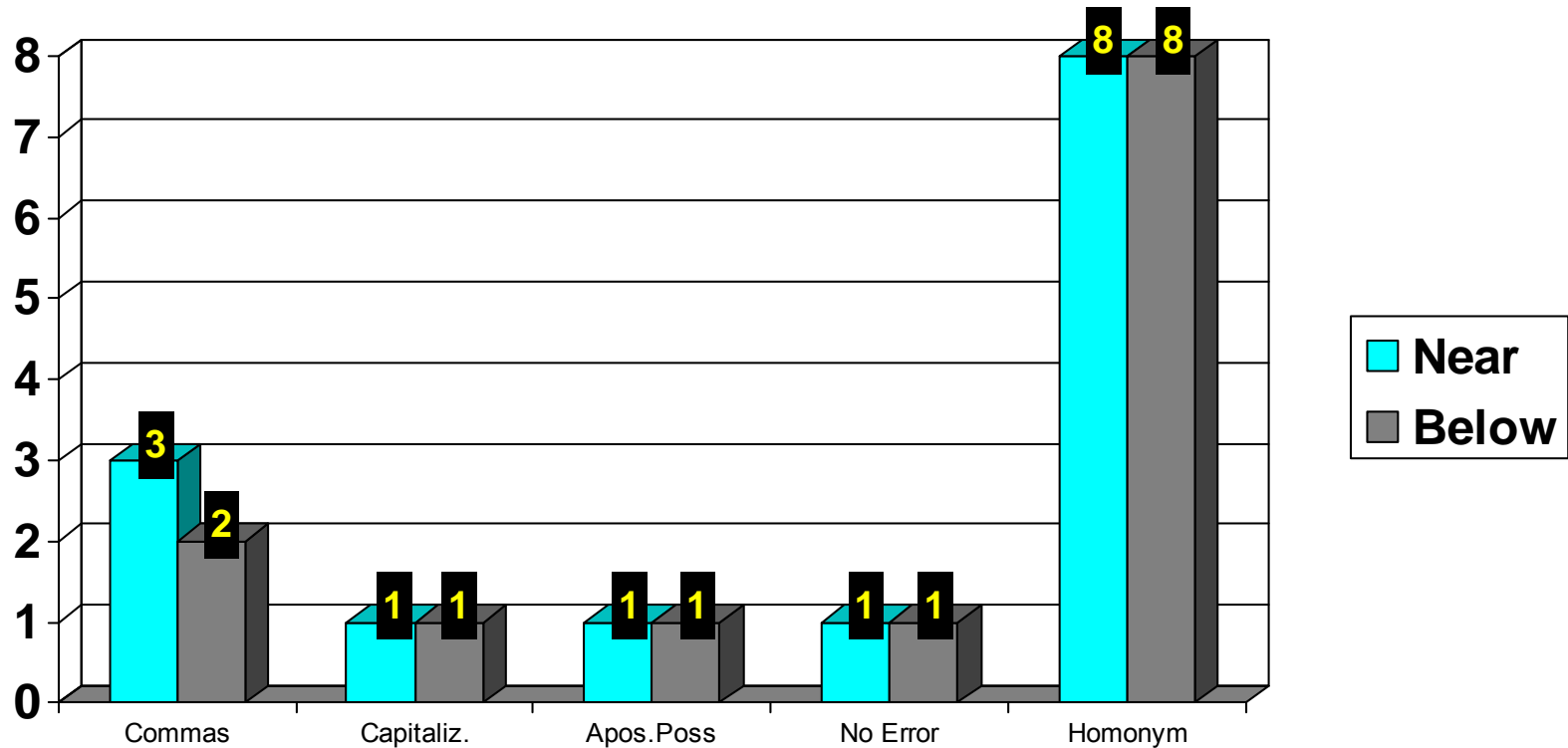
Testing verb usage

4. Sentence 5: *The recognition committee are planning to begin the evening's event with a social hour.*

Which correction should be made to sentence 5?

- (1) change are to is
- (2) change planning to planned
- (3) insert a comma after begin
- (4) change evening's to evenings
- (5) replace hour with our

What Types of Mechanics Items Did Candidates Find Most Difficult?



Mechanics—Comma errors

6. Sentence 10: *For the dinner menu, we would like our guests to choose from four entrée selections, such as seafood chicken, beef, or vegetarian, that they may request in advance.*

Which correction should be made to sentence 10?

- (1) remove the comma after menu
- (2) change we to they
- (3) change choose to chose
- (4) insert a comma after seafood
- (5) change that to but

Mechanics--Homonyms

8. Sentence 12: **Also, a variety of breads and roles is to be placed on the table.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 12?

- (1) remove the comma after Also
- (2) insert a comma after breads
- (3) replace roles with rolls
- (4) change is to are
- (5) change to be placed to could be placed

An Excellent Source for Homonyms . . .

**Alan Cooper's web site has approximately
1529 homonyms in 706 sets.**

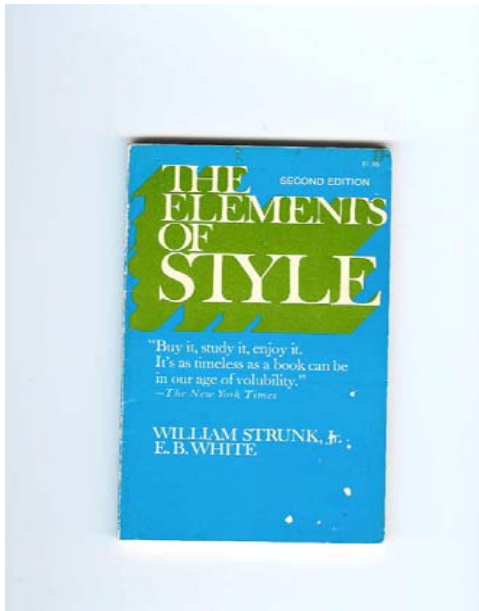
www.cooper.com/alan/homonym_list.html

What do these results tell us?



Difficulty with Organization and Sentence Structure indicates problems with higher order operations involving analysis and synthesis.

Strunk & White *Elements of Style* – Tip 2



From Chapter II: Elementary Principles of Composition

Principle 16: *Keep related words together.* pp. 22-24.

“The position of the words in a sentence is the principal means of showing their relationship.”

Why?

Because “Confusion and ambiguity result when words are badly placed.”

Why Do We Write?



- Writing is a medium of communication.
- We can *explain, request, complain, question,* and *share* our thoughts with others.
- Writing is intended to be ***read*** by an audience.

Use Your Local Newspaper as Your Textbook



Encourage test takers to prepare for the Language Arts, Writing Test by:

- Reading articles of interest in their local newspapers.
- Evaluating the evidence used by the writer.
- Writing journals to agree or disagree with, or to evaluate the articles.
- Responding to the articles by writing letters to the editor.

Which Instructional Strategies Work Best?

- **Writing is best taught by the inquiry approach or the candidates actually writing.**
- **Sentence combining is an effective strategy for improving the quality of writing.**



Sentence Combining

Researchers have found that sentence combining is an effective strategy for improving the quality of writing.

Definition: Combining short sentences into longer ones and inserting elements into simple sentences.

- Scrambled Sentences
- Sentence Deconstruction
- Sentence Effectiveness
- Scrambled Paragraphs

Teaching Points: Sentence Combining

- Don't teach the sentence as a grammar lesson: ***subject***, ***predicate***, ***complement*** and ***modifiers***, but teach the sentence as a cohesive unit of words, phrases, and clauses.
- Most candidates know what a sentence is, but they don't see it as a group of words expressing a *complete thought*.

Sentence Combining: Activity One

In this Scrambled Sentence exercise, a sentence has been broken into parts, and the parts have been listed out of their order. Read the parts carefully and then decide what would be the best order in which to arrange them to form a well-constructed, effective sentence.

Scrambled Sentence 1

A- begin to lengthen

B- to shorten

C- the nights

D- the days

E- after June 21st

Scrambled Sentence 1

After June 21st, the nights begin to lengthen, the days to shorten.

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Sentence Combining: Activity Two

In this activity, there are a series of short, often choppy sentences, resulting in a monotonous style. Using appropriate connectives and proper subordination, combine statements so as to show the relationship of ideas that apparently belong together.

Sentence Effectiveness Activity 1

1. The Arch of Triumph in Paris is the largest triumphal arch in the world.
2. It was erected to commemorate the victories of the armies of the French Revolution and of Napoleon.
3. Beneath it there now lies buried the body of an unknown soldier.
4. He is the symbol of thousands of Frenchmen.
5. They gave their lives fighting Germany in World War I.

Resulting Sentence . . .

Beneath the Arch of Triumph in Paris, the world's largest triumphal arch erected to commemorate the victories of the armies of the French Revolution and Napoleon, now lies buried the body of an unknown soldier, the symbol of thousands of Frenchmen who gave their lives fighting Germany in World War I.

Teaching Points:

Introductory phrases

Appositives

Relative Clauses

Comma rules for introductory phrases and appositives

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Sentence Combining: Activity Three

*The sentences below are listed out of their original order. Read them carefully and decide what would be the **best order** in which to arrange them.*

Scrambled Paragraph 1

- A- This studio he turned into a kind of “art factory.”
- B- Then he would tell a student to go on with the coloring.
- C- Three thousand pictures were finally turned out in this center, many of them sold for high prices.
- D- The master would first sketch the main outlines of a picture.
- E- Once, in a studio, Rubens, the famous artist became the master of a group of painters.
- F- Later, he himself would give the finishing touches to the painting.

Resulting Paragraph . . .

Once, in a large, studio, Rubens, the famous artist, became the master of a group of painters.

This **studio** he turned into a kind of “art factory.”

The **master would first sketch** the main outlines of a picture.

Then he would tell a student to go on with the coloring.

Later, he himself would give the finishing touches to the painting.

Three thousand pictures were **finally** turned out in this center of art, many of which were sold for high prices.

Order: E, A, D, B, F, C

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Some Final Thoughts to Close Part I



- “Learning to write and write well is important for academic achievement and for success in business and the professions.
- It is a crucial skill for participating in a democratic society such as ours.
- Research shows that writing develops higher-order thinking skills, and, that in the right context, increased writing means improved performance.”

– *David Bloome, NCTE President*

Part II: Scoring the Essay

GEDTS and Writing Assessment

- Since 1988, GEDTS has had a direct assessment of writing (essay) on both the Writing Skills Test and the Language Arts, Writing Test (2002 Series).
- In 2002, a GED test taker had to earn a minimum score on the direct assessment in order to pass the Language Arts, Writing Test.

The Essay Prompt

The GED Essay Topic is really a *prompt*— i.e. a sentence(s) that provides the examinee with a starting point for writing a response.



The Essay Prompt (cont'd)



- Presents the test taker with a single topic
- Is based on general knowledge,
- Chosen to interest both writer and reader,
- Is the same rhetorical type and format as all other operational topics—expository,
- Has been field tested, and
- Analyzed by psychometricians.

Language Arts, Writing Test, Part I

- Test takers must begin the test with the multiple-choice items. They will have 75 mins. to work through the same processes they will use in their essays to make corrections, revision, and construction shifts:
 - surface editing
 - organizing
 - revising

Language Arts, Writing Test, Part II

After 75 mins. on the multiple-choice section, the test takers are directed to begin Part II, The Essay.

They will have 45 minutes to

- Plan,
- Draft, and
- Revise

their responses to the prompt.

No specialized knowledge needed to respond

“In your essay, use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.”

Topic AA

Sample Prompt AA

In addition to knowledge from books, there is also common sense knowledge that helps us in our lives.

In your essay, identify one type of common sense knowledge that you use and explain how it helps you.

How Readers Score Responses to the Prompt

Readers acknowledge that an examinee's response may take into account multiple definitions for words.

The reader understands that the writer had only 45 minutes to plan, draft, and revise the response.

Therefore, the test taker's response is not a finished product, but a "good first draft."

Some Considerations for Responding to the Prompt

If writer may have misread or misinterpreted the wording of the prompt (e.g., reading the word “opinion” for “options,” the reader will consider the writer’s response a valid attempt to respond to the prompt and not mark it **off topic**.

Although the prompt states, “Identify one opinion, problem, incident, etc.,” the writer **may develop** several opinions to support his/her response.

However, each opinion must be developed with specific and relevant detail so that the reader can understand and follow the writer’s ideas.

How Readers Score

Unlike a classroom teacher, the GEDTS-trained reader reads the response to get an Overall impression, *not to look for specific errors in sentence structure, usage, grammar, and mechanics.*

The **writer** must “build the bridges of communication” to the **reader** through his/her words, sentences, etc. The **reader’s job is not to** “build bridges” to the writer by making inferences or judgments about the writer’s intent.

- *The reader’s impression is formed solely by the writer’s words on the page(s).*
- *The reader reads **only the two pages of the answer sheet**—no additions.*

What is Holistic Scoring?

“Holistic Scoring is a method of evaluating writing in which a reader judges a piece of writing for its **overall effectiveness**. No one factor neither grammar, organization, spelling, etc.—is weighted more than any other in determining the overall effectiveness of the piece of writing. The salient features of holistic scoring have been described by Conlan (1976).”

Holistic Scoring Guidelines

Refer to the document in your Chief Reader Manual

- Read and Score.
- Red pens down..
- Do not change your score.
- When in doubt, refer to the scoring guide criteria.
- Be aware that there can be a range of papers within a score point.
- Avoid the tendency to adjust the number of 4s, 3s, 2s, and 1s in a given set of papers.
- Be aware of and avoid potential biasing factors.
- Score only what is on the paper.
- This is only a 45 minute test.

The 2002 Series Scoring Rubric

	1	2	3	4
	Inadequate	Marginal	Adequate	Effective
	Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer's ideas.	Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer's ideas.	Reader understands writer's ideas.	Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.
Response to the Prompt	Attempts to address prompt but with little or no success in establishing a focus.	Addresses the prompt, though the focus may shift.	Uses the writing prompt to establish a main idea.	Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.
Organization	Fails to organize ideas.	Shows some evidence of an organizational plan.	Uses an identifiable organizational plan.	Establishes a clear and logical organization.
Development and Details	Demonstrates little or no development; usually lacks details or examples or presents irrelevant information.	Has some development but lacks specific details; may be limited to a listing, repetitions, or generalizations.	Has focused but occasionally uneven development; incorporates some specific detail.	Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.
Conventions of EAE	May exhibit minimal or no control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE	May demonstrate inconsistent control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.	Generally controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.	Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English (EAE).
Word Choice	Exhibits weak and/or inappropriate words.	Exhibits a narrow range of word choice, often including inappropriate selections.	Exhibits appropriate word choice.	Exhibits varied and precise word choice.

Characteristics for each Score Point

Each score has a descriptor:

1-Score is ***INADEQUATE***

2-Score is ***MARGINAL***

3-Score is ***ADEQUATE***

4-Score is ***EFFECTIVE***

Since writers write for an audience, the scoring guide also describes the reader's (audience's) overall impression of a response for each score point:

1-Score Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer's ideas.:

2-Score: Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer's ideas.

3-Score: Reader understands the writer's ideas.

4-Score: Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.

4-Score: Effective

Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.

- Response:** Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.
- Organization:** Establishes a clear and logical organization.
- Development:** Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.
- EAE:** Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English (EAE).
- Word Choice:** Exhibits varied and precise word choice.

3-Score: Adequate

Reader understands the writer's ideas.

- Response:** Uses the writing prompt to establish a main idea.
- Organization:** Uses an identifiable organizational plan.
- Development:** Has focused but occasionally uneven development; incorporates some specific details.
- EAE:** Generally controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
- Word Choice:** Exhibits appropriate word choice.

2-Score: Marginal

Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer's ideas.

- Response:** Addresses the prompt but the focus may shift.
- Organization:** Shows some evidence of an organizational plan.
- Development:** Has some development but lacks specific details; may be limited to a listing, repetitions, or generalizations.
- EAE:** May demonstrate inconsistent control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
- Word Choice:** Exhibits a narrow range of word choice, often including inappropriate selections.

1-Score: Inadequate

Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer's ideas.

- Response:** Attempts to address the prompt but with little or no success in establishing a focus.
- Organization:** Fails to organize ideas.
- Development:** Demonstrates little or no development; usually lacks details or examples or presents irrelevant information.
- EAE:** May exhibit minimal or no control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
- Word Choice:** Exhibits weak and/or inappropriate words

The GED Essay Scoring

- Two certified GED[®] essay readers read and score the examinees' responses.
- The two scores are averaged with the possibility of .5 scores (e.g. 2- and 3- is 2.5).
- The Chief Reader resolves discrepant scores.

AA Set 1

AA15374688	
AA15374124	
AA15374525	
AA15373716	

AA Set 2

AA15374386	
AA15373608	
AA15373745	
AA15374532	

Conclusion and Contact Information

- Discussion and Questions
- Contact for further information:
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