

Lesson

1

writing assignment directions to write about a given topic

The **topic** is the subject of your essay. All the ideas in your essay should relate to this topic.

Planning

On Part II of the GED Language Arts, Writing Test, you will have 45 minutes to write an essay on an assigned topic. Because you are expected to write only one draft, you should spend about five minutes planning your essay. Thinking about the topic and then gathering ideas, examples, and supporting details are critical in creating a successful GED essay. That is why the first step in the writing process is planning.

Understanding the Writing Assignment

The second part of the GED Language Arts, Writing Test is a **writing assignment** for an essay. This test requires you to state your view on a topic and to support that view with examples. For instance, here is a typical GED writing assignment.

Has modern technology, such as the computer, made people's lives better or worse?

Write an essay to explain your view on that topic. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your view.

The **instructions** tell what kind of information to give in your essay.

The key words *explain your view* tell what you should do in your essay. This chart contains key words commonly used in essay instructions that are clues to the kind of information you should give.



You do not need any specialized knowledge to write a GED essay.

If the instructions say	You should
explain why state the reasons	write about causes or reasons
explain the effects discuss the advantages and disadvantages	write about effects
describe	discuss the qualities of something
state your position present your view give your opinion	tell what you think about an issue and why
discuss the similarities and differences compare and contrast	explain how things are alike and different

Determining Your Main Idea

After you gather ideas on a topic, you need to determine the **main idea** of your essay. The main idea is the most important point you are trying to make about the topic. To determine your main idea, look at all your ideas and try to figure out what they have in common.

For example, if the topic is about the positive and negative effects of technology, see if your ideas are mostly positive effects, negative effects, or both. If you wrote mostly positive effects, your main idea might be *Overall, technology has had many positive effects on society.*

Look at the list of ideas gathered for this topic.

TOPIC: Are there more advantages or disadvantages to owning a car?

have to pay for insurance
pollutes the air more than public transportation
buying and upkeep cost more than taking the bus
can go where you want, when you want
not always easy to find parking
have privacy in a car

Put a check mark by the sentence that best states the main idea of this list.

- (a) Owning a car has many advantages.
 (b) Car ownership has many disadvantages.

Most of the ideas relate to the problems that car owners have. Therefore, a good main idea for this list would be *option (b)*.

Read the topic and ideas below. Write a main idea statement.

TOPIC: Is it better to own or rent your home?

renters have to depend on the landlord for repairs
buying a home is a good investment
if you own, you're responsible for repairs and maintenance
renters can be forced to move when lease is up
rents can increase suddenly
have to pay property taxes if you own

Main idea statement: _____

Most of the ideas listed are advantages of owning a home. Therefore, your main idea statement should be something like *Owning your home is better than renting.*

main idea
the most important
point you are trying
to make



Your main idea should be one sentence that is broad enough to cover all your supporting ideas.