



Understanding the GED

The American Council on Education offers the General Equivalency Diploma, GED. Originally developed in 1942, the GED helped returning World War II veterans finish their studies and re-enter civilian life. Then, as now, the GED Tests measured the academic skills and knowledge expected of high school graduates in the United States or Canada. Recognized throughout North America, the GED Testing Program has served as a bridge to education and employment for an estimated 15.2 million people over its 60-year history (American Council on Education 2007).

GED Test Construction:

The current GED consists of the following:

Subject	Number of Items	Time Limit	Topics
Language Arts, Writing, Part I	50	75 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sentence structure▪ Organization▪ Usage▪ Mechanics
Language Arts, Writing, Part II	1 Complete Essay	45 minutes	
Social Studies	50	70 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ American History▪ World History▪ Civics▪ Government▪ Economics▪ Geography
Science	50	80 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Life Science▪ Earth Science▪ Space Science▪ Physical Science▪ Environmental Topics▪ Health Topics

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Language Arts, Reading	40	65 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fiction (plays, poems, prose) ▪ Nonfiction (letters, biographies, newspaper & magazine articles, manuals & forms)
Mathematics, Part I- Calculator Part II- no calculator	50	90 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number Operations ▪ Number Sense ▪ Measurement ▪ Geometry ▪ Data Analysis ▪ Probability ▪ Statistics ▪ Algebra ▪ Functions ▪ Patterns

Questions on the current GED test are classified by cognitive level using an adaptation of Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Questions classified at the highest cognitive levels require the use of skills described at the lower levels. Because the test is constructed using a skills-based approach, 100% knowledge of every GED topic is not required. Rather, successful GED examinees have developed the cognitive skills necessary to evaluate and synthesize knowledge, whether familiar or not. This curriculum suggests a skills-based approach to GED subjects, with an emphasis on Reading, Writing and Math skills that can be carried throughout every GED topic.

GED Scoring

As of January 1, 2002, an examinee must achieve a minimum standard score of 410 points on all five tests. Additionally, an examinee must receive a minimum total standard score of 2,250 on the entire battery (average score of 450 on all tests).

Special Emphasis

Educators should note that, in 2003, nearly 1/3 (29.9%) of GED test takers in the United States failed to achieve the minimum GED score standard. Data from the GED Mathematics Training Institute of 2006 indicate that passing rates on the math exam were the lowest among the five academic subject areas. Therefore, this curriculum suggests that a substantial amount of time be dedicated to the teaching and learning of math skills identified on the GED test.