

The Writing Process

The idea that writing is a process is an important one to learn. What you write doesn't have to be perfect immediately. You can't magically write a great essay off the top of your head. Even if you can, going through a writing process will make it even better. Following a process in your writing is the best way to improve it.

The writing process for the GED essay is a little different than the process for writing an essay at home. That's because you have a limited amount of time and a particular format to follow. Here's a writing process, specially designed for the GED essay:

Reading the Prompt

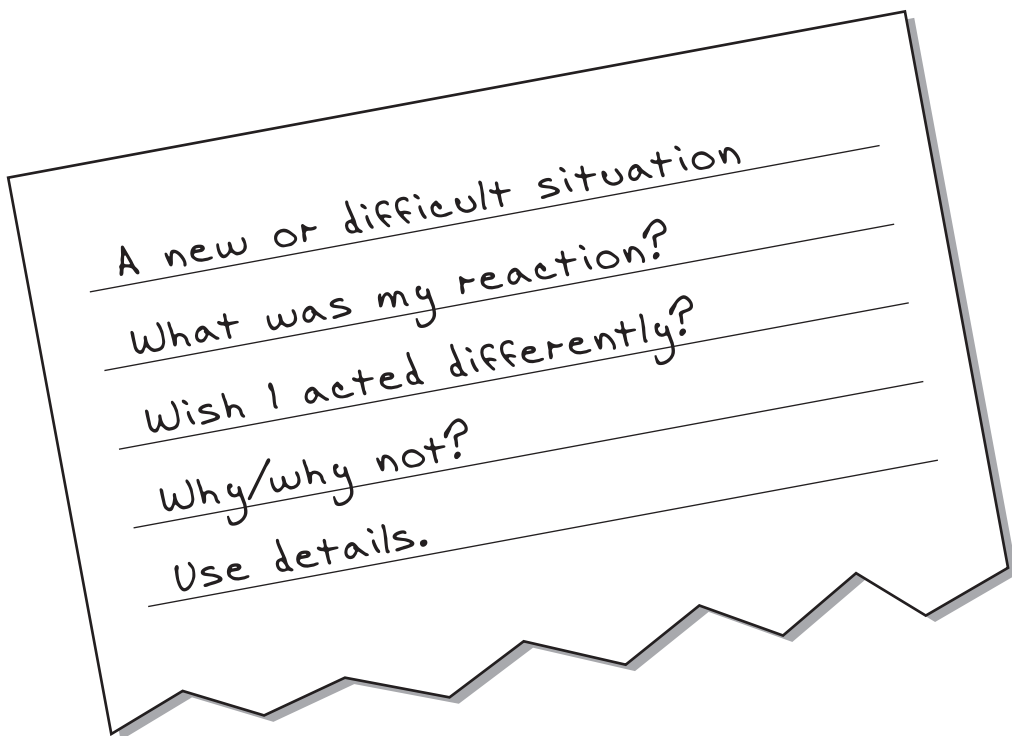
Start by reading the essay prompt. The prompt is your guide to writing your whole essay. You'll have scratch paper to help you prepare your essay, so list all the elements in the prompt you'll need to address.

Here's an example prompt:

Sometimes, we don't know in advance how we'll react to a new situation.

Describe a time when you were faced with a new or difficult situation and explain your reaction. Do you wish you'd acted differently? Why or why not? Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Note everything that you need to pay attention to in this prompt. Your notes might look like this:



Make sure you understand what the prompt is asking and that you include everything the prompt asks for.

Brainstorming Ideas

Once you've read the prompt, it's time to do some brainstorming. That means, thinking up ideas. You've broken up the prompt into all the different things it asks for, so be sure to include ideas for each area.

There are many different ways you can brainstorm. Spend a couple of minutes figuring out the main thing you're going to write about. Then, try to think of as many relevant ideas and things to

say about your main idea as possible. You'll need a lot of details to fill in your main idea and completely explain what you mean. Some brainstorming tools are:

- ! **Brainstorming:** Basic brainstorming means to just write down whatever comes into your head, anywhere on a piece of paper. It's easier to do with a friend, but you can practice brainstorming on your own. Some people even like to doodle in their brainstorming! Practice will help you understand what works best for you.
- ! **Questioning:** A good way to get ideas is to ask a lot of questions. What would you want to know, if you were reading the essay? What questions does the issue raise for you?
- ! **Freewriting:** Freewriting means that you just pick up your pencil and start writing on the topic. Write anything that comes to mind! Then, you can use your freewriting as ideas to write an organized draft.
- ! **Visualizing:** If you're a visual person and like pictures, you can close your eyes and try to picture things related to what you're writing about. You can draw pictures or sketches about what you want to say, and then use that to help you find the right words. Visualizing can help you come up with a lot of visual details.
- ! **List of Ideas:** This is just writing down your ideas in a list. Then, you can organize them later.
- ! **Idea Web:** A web is a visual organizer to help you think of ideas and track their relationships with each other. Put your main idea in the center, and then write down related ideas nearby. Link them with lines to show what ideas go with each other.

Different methods of brainstorming work best for different people. Find out what works best for you by experimenting with different kinds of brainstorming.

Organizing Your Ideas

Once you've gotten some ideas together through brainstorming, it's time to get organized. That means putting your essay together, with a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Your ideas need to be in a logical order, so it makes sense to the reader.

Organizing your ideas puts them in an order that will help you write your essay. This is an intermediate step to get from brainstorming to a complete essay. It helps to group your ideas according to the structure you'll use for your essay.

Organize your ideas for your introduction. Include an attention-grabbing sentence, like a question or a surprising statement, to start your introduction. This will help get the reader interested in what you've got to say. Your introduction will also need to state your main idea. Give the short answer to the question. What's your main focus of the whole essay? Finally, you'll want a transition to the rest of your essay. What ties the introduction with what comes next? As you're organizing, you might decide not to use all of your ideas, and you might think of new ideas to include. That's part of the writing process.

Next, organize your ideas for the middle of your essay. Decide how many paragraphs you'll have (usually 2–4). Each paragraph will have a main idea, so write down your main idea for each paragraph. The main idea of each paragraph needs to support, or

tell more about, the overall main idea of your essay. It needs to relate to the introduction.

Put together details that go in each paragraph. The details need to support, or tell more about, the main idea for the paragraph. Then, try to think of a transition for each paragraph in the middle of your essay. How does this paragraph tie to the next paragraph? What's the logical link between the two?

Finally, you need to organize your ideas for your conclusion. Don't just restate things you've said before. Come to some conclusion, or result, based on what you've written. Summarize what you've said, but focus on why it's important. Expand on what you've said, too. How does it apply to the rest of the world? Other people? Bigger issues? Can you link it to new and bigger ideas? End with a strong final sentence, one that really makes the reader think. A question is a good idea here, too... something to apply what you've been talking about to big ideas.

Writing Your Draft

If you have all your ideas organized and down on paper, writing your draft should be straightforward. Follow your outline, to put together your ideas into a full essay. Pay attention to writing complete, clear, easy-to-understand sentences and staying on the topic. If you come up with new ideas while you're writing, that's okay—but don't let it lead you away from what you really want to say. Try to write neatly in the test booklet, so the reader can understand what you're saying.

Reviewing Your Draft

Once you've drafted your essay, go back and read through it. Look for misspelled words, or incorrect words. You can make minor changes to spelling and punctuation, but don't fill up your paper with revisions. That will make it difficult to read. If you think of something to add, you might consider putting it at the end of your essay. But if it's something minor, you might choose to leave it out.

If you've followed the writing process, you should have a well-organized, easy-to-understand essay that stays on topic and answers the essay prompt.