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## Chapter 1

# Making Sense of the TASC

In this chapter, we explore the differences between the TASC test and the GED and why many states have chosen the TASC as their high-school equivalency exam. Because the TASC is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, it's important for you to know what those are. Next, we discuss the topics and format of each of the subject areas covered on the TASC. Lastly, we explore how you'll be scored in each of the different areas and what scores you need to get your TASC diploma.

## Why the TASC and Not the GED?

In many states, such as New York, West Virginia, and Indiana, the TASC has replaced the GED completely. Students living in those states who are pursuing their high-school equivalency can no longer take the GED exam — they must take the TASC instead. It's worth double-checking which high-school equivalency options your state permits. Some states only offer the GED, others only offer the TASC, and others give students a choice between the GED and the TASC. Either way, it's good to keep in mind that not all high-school equivalency exams are created equal.

Two of the most noticeable differences between the TASC and GED tests are the cost and the format flexibility. The price of the TASC is more reasonable and affordable than that of the GED, and the exam is also available as a paper-and-pencil test as well as online. If English isn't your native language, you also have the option of taking the Spanish version of the TASC. There are also large-print, Braille, and audio versions of the TASC available for those students with special needs.

Another advantage that the TASC has over the GED exam is that the TASC is gradually being aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This will help you stay competitive for both career and college opportunities by showing that your abilities and knowledge in each subject are of the right standard to help you succeed.

Lastly, the types of scores you receive from taking the TASC are both College and Career Readiness (CCR) scores and passing scores. Earning a satisfactory CCR score shows how well-prepared you are and that you can compete with any American high school graduate!

## Getting Up to Speed with Common Core

*The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The Standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.*

—Common Core State Standards Initiative

Today's students need to be better prepared than ever to handle the increasing demands of colleges and industry. Previously, each state in America used to have its own academic curriculum. This meant that it was virtually impossible to compare students from different states because the curriculum and standards for graduating high school varied greatly from state to state. But all that changed recently with the release of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which establish clear, consistent guidelines for what every student needs to know in math and English language arts (ELA) from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Common Core State Standards were drafted by leading experts and teachers throughout the country and are designed to ensure that all students will be ready for success after high school. By focusing on developing critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, the Common Core helps prepare students for today's freshman-level college courses, workforce training programs, and entry-level careers.

Currently, CCSS are available in ELA and mathematics, with strands devoted to the other content areas such as social studies and science. Forty-two states so far have voluntarily adopted the CCSS and are moving forward with their full implementation. Teachers in those states now have a way to measure all students' progress throughout the school year to ensure that they're on the right path to success in their academic careers.



REMEMBER

The CCSS have a greater focus on rigor and knowing a topic in depth. This means at each successive grade level, a topic is looked at again in a more detailed way. When educators and policy makers discuss *rigor*, they mean that there are now higher goals for all students. In addition, there's a greater emphasis on using evidence in all subject areas. Analyzing and using nonfiction texts are common practices in high schools today as well. In mathematics and science, there's a greater focus on solving real-world problems, methods of solving or experimenting in different situations, and the use of models.

In other words, the TASC exam just became a little bit tougher to pass! But the good news is that the new format will better prepare you for the challenging world of work or college.



TIP

To register for the TASC, visit <http://www.tasctest.com> and follow the instructions.

# Exploring the New TASC Exam

The TASC exam measures high-school equivalency and college and career readiness in five subject areas: Language Arts–Reading, Language Arts–Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The entire test lasts about seven hours, with each section having its own time limits.

## Subject sections

This section breaks down what each of the TASC subtests covers, what kind of questions you can expect, and how long you have to complete each subtest. With the advance of new technology, the question format for the test may change and become more interactive over time.

### Language Arts–Reading

The Language Arts–Reading test includes multiple-choice, constructed-response, and technology-enhanced questions that test the student’s ability to understand the information presented in excerpts from novels, short stories, poetry, plays, newspapers, magazines, and business or legal text passages. The test includes both literary (30 percent) and informational (70 percent) texts. The time limit for this section is 75 minutes, and the test consists of 50 questions.

### Language Arts–Writing

The Language Arts–Writing test is separated into two parts: multiple-choice questions and an essay question. Students are expected to answer 50 multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions, in which they must identify grammar, spelling, and other mechanical writing errors and demonstrate their ability to make corrections to each sentence. The test has both passage-based items and stand-alone or discrete questions. The time limit for this first part is 60 minutes.

Students are also expected to write an essay that either states and supports a claim or provides information about a particular topic of interest. Essays are scored based on the following criteria: clear and strategic organization, clarity of expression, complete development of ideas, sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and spelling. For the essay prompt, you have 45 minutes to construct a response to a passage, excerpt, or multiple selections.

### Mathematics

The Mathematics section has five main fields: numbers and quantity (13 percent), algebra (26 percent), functions (26 percent), geometry (23 percent), and statistics and probability (12 percent). Most questions are word problems and involve real-life situations or require students to interpret information presented in diagrams, charts, graphs, and tables. Students are given a math summary sheet of formulas to use during the test. Be sure to become familiar with what formulas are on the sheet and which ones you need to remember. The question styles found in this section are multiple choice (40 questions) and gridded response (12 questions).

Section 1 of the Mathematics test allows the use of a calculator and has a time limit of 50 minutes. Section 2 does *not* permit the use of a calculator and has a time limit of 55 minutes.

### Social Studies

The Social Studies exam tests students on five fields: U.S. history (25 percent), world history (15 percent), civics and government (25 percent), geography (15 percent), and economics (20 percent). The Social Studies test gauges students’ understanding of the basic principles in

each of those areas and tests their ability to interpret information presented in passages, illustrations, graphs, and charts. You have 75 minutes to complete the 47 multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions.

## Science

The Science test focuses on multiple-choice questions pulled from three main fields: physical science (36 percent), life science (36 percent), and earth and space science (28 percent). Each discipline is subdivided into several core ideas. Questions may require the student to recall knowledge, apply knowledge and skills, or reason. The number of test questions per core idea depends on the number of performance expectations within that core idea (usually about two to five questions). You have 85 minutes to complete the 47 multiple-choice questions.

## New question formats

Since 2015, the TASC has begun to feature a variety of new question formats. Because the TASC is now offered as a computer-based test, there are now more options available for online questions and responses. In this section, we list some of the new formats you can expect to see.



TIP

You can also find interactive demonstrations of these new formats on the website: <http://www.tasctest.com>.

### Constructed response

A constructed-response item is a short-answer question. Instead of choosing from four multiple-choice answers, you have to come up with your own answer.

### Multiple-select response

This type of question is just like the familiar multiple-choice questions that you're probably already used to, but with one big difference — instead of having a single correct answer, there is more than one possible answer, so you have to make sure you read the instructions carefully and select *all* the correct answers.

### Evidence-based select response

You may see this format on the Language Arts–Reading test. In the first part, Part A, you read and analyze a text and then choose a conclusion from four multiple-choice options. In the second part, Part B, you choose evidence from the text to support your conclusion in Part A. The second part may be in multiple-choice format or it may be a multiple-select response.

### Drag and drop

In this format, on the computer version of the test, you drag and drop the correct responses to complete the blanks or empty boxes in the question stem. In the print edition of this book, you simply draw lines to match answers to these spaces.

## TASC at a glance

Table 1-1 summarizes the TASC test and gives the breakdown by approximate number of items and time for each section.

**TABLE 1-1 Breakdown of TASC Sections**

Subject	Topics	Time in Minutes (English Version)	Time in Minutes (Spanish Version)	Number of Questions
Language Arts–Reading	Information reading & language	75	80	50
	Literary reading & language			
Language Arts–Writing	Language	105	110	50
	Writing			One essay
Mathematics	Numbers & quantity	50 (calculator)	55 (calculator)	40
	Algebra	55 (no calculator)	60 (no calculator)	12 gridded responses
	Functions			
	Geometry			
	Statistics & probability			
Social Studies	U.S. history	75	80	47
	World history			
	Civics & government			
	Geography			
	Economics			
Science	Physical science	85	90	47
	Life science			
	Earth & space science			

## Scoring: How Do You Measure Up?

Probably the one question that is most important to you is how will you be graded? Each of the multiple-choice and gridded-response questions is worth 1 point. You don't get points off for selecting the wrong answer, so make sure to answer *every* question. Multiple-response questions may be scored differently because they may have more than one correct answer. In reading questions with a Part A and Part B, you must successfully answer Part B to get credit for the question as a whole.

Your essay will be read by two readers who will each score it from 0 to 4. If both scores match or are within a point of each other, then the scores are added together and that is your essay score (out of 8 possible points). For example, if the readers score your essay as a 2 and a 3, then your essay score will be 5. On the other hand, if the two scores differ by more than a point, then a third reader will be asked to score your essay as well. For example, if the two original readers score your essay as a 2 and a 4, that's a 2-point difference, so a third reader will be brought in to read your essay. The sum of the two scores out of the three which are closest together will then be used for your overall score.

The total of all your earned points is your raw score for each section. Your raw score is then put into a mathematical algorithm to compute your scaled score. You'll receive this score (the scaled score) on your score report for each of the five areas. If you earn passing scores on all

five sections, then you'll have passed the entire TASC test. The overall score is the average of the five separate subject areas. Passing scores for the subject areas are:

- » Language Arts–Reading: 500
- » Language Arts–Writing: 500 and at least a 2 out of 8 on the essay
- » Mathematics: 500
- » Social Studies: 500
- » Science: 500

Besides your passing scores, you'll also receive a College and Career Readiness (CCR) score in each of the five areas. This score is used to gauge how likely a person is to succeed in college courses. If you meet or exceed the CCR passing score, then it indicates that you're likely to earn a C or better in college courses in that content area.