

Chapter 1

Taking a Quick Glance at the GED Science Test

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The GED test offers high-school dropouts, people who leave school early, and people who were educated outside the United States an opportunity to earn the equivalent of a U.S. high-school diploma without the need for full-time attendance in either day or night school. The GED certificate is a recognized standard that makes securing a job or college placement easier.

The GED test complies with current 12th grade standards in the United States and meets the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The GED test also covers the Common Core Standards, used in most states in the country. These standards are based on the actual expectations stated by employers and postsecondary institutions.

The GED test measures whether you understand and can use what high-school seniors across the country have studied before they graduate. Employers want better-educated employees. In addition, some colleges may be uncertain of the quality of foreign credentials. The GED certificate provides those assurances. When you pass the GED test, you earn a high-school equivalency diploma. That can open many doors for you — perhaps doors that you don't even know exist at this point.

The new GED test is now given on a computer and has taken advantage of many different formats that the computer can create. Most of them are variations of multiple choice. You can see examples of all these formats and how they would appear on the computer screen by looking at any of the new editions of the *GED Test For Dummies* books (published by Wiley).



For the purposes of this book, we use mainly the multiple-choice option because it's one of the universally accepted formats for testing of this type, and if you can acquire the skills to answer a multiple-choice question, you can easily manage any of its variations.

Ready to get started? This chapter gives you the basics of the GED Science test: how the test is administered and what it looks like, how to schedule the test, including whether you're eligible, and how your score is calculated (so you know what you need to focus on to pass).

Note: The diagnostic test in Chapter 3 helps you discover your weaknesses and strengths so that with additional practice, you can convert your weaknesses into strengths.

Knowing What to Expect: The GED Test Format

A computer administers the GED test. That means that all the questions appear on a computer screen, and you enter all your answers into a computer. You read, evaluate, analyze, and write everything on the computer. Even when drafting an essay, you don't use paper. Instead, the test center provides you with an erasable tablet. If you know how to use a computer and are comfortable with a keyboard and a mouse, you're ahead of the game. If not, practice your keyboarding. Also, practice reading from a computer screen because reading from a screen is very different from reading printed materials. At the very least, you need to get more comfortable with computers, even if that means taking a short course at a local learning center. In the case of the GED test, the more familiar you are with computers, the more comfortable you'll feel taking the computerized test.



Under certain circumstances, as a special accommodation, the sections are available in booklet format. Check with the GED Testing Service to see what exceptions are acceptable.

The computer-based GED test allows for speedy, detailed feedback on your performance. When you pass (yes, we said *when* and not *if*, because we believe in you), the GED Testing Service provides both a diploma and a transcript of your scores, similar to what high-school graduates receive. They're available online at www.gedtesting.com within a day of completing the test. You can then send your transcript and diploma to an employer or college. Doing so allows employers and colleges access to a detailed outline of your scores, achievement, and demonstrated skills and abilities. This outline is also a useful tool for you to review your progress. It highlights areas where you did well and areas where you need further work. If you want to (or have to) retake the test, these results provide a guide to what you should work on to improve your scores. Requests for additional copies of transcripts are handled online and also are available within a day.

Getting a Glimpse of What's on the Science Test

The GED Science test is 90 minutes long. The test includes two short-answer questions, but these questions are not timed separately. Students are expected to manage their time and spend about 10 minutes on each of the short-answer questions. To prepare for the Science test, read as much science material as you can get your hands on. Whenever you don't understand a word or concept, look it up in a dictionary or online. The items on the Science test assume a high-school level of science vocabulary.

You don't have to be a nuclear physicist to answer the questions, but you should be familiar with the vocabulary normally understood by someone completing high school. If you work at improving your scientific vocabulary, you should have little trouble with the Science test. (**Note:** That same advice applies to all the GED test's sections. Improve your vocabulary in each subject and you'll perform better.)

The Science test concentrates on two main themes:

- ✓ Human health and living systems
- ✓ Energy and related systems

In addition, the content of the problems focus on one of the following areas:

- ✔ **Physical science:** About 40 percent of the test focuses on physics and chemistry, including topics such as conservation, transformation, and energy flow; work, motion, and forces; and chemical properties and reactions related to living systems.
- ✔ **Life science:** Another 40 percent of the Science test deals with life science, including biology and, more specifically, the human body and health, the relationship between life functions and energy intake, ecosystems, the structure and function of life, and heredity and evolution.
- ✔ **Earth and space science:** This area makes up the remaining 20 percent of this test and includes astronomy — interactions between Earth’s systems and living things, Earth and its system components and interactions, and the structure and organization of the cosmos.

Go ahead and type one of the three content areas into your favorite search engine to find material to read. You’ll find links to articles and material from all different levels. Filter your choices by the level you want and need — for example, use keywords such as “scientific theories,” “scientific discoveries,” “scientific method,” “human health,” “living systems,” “energy,” “the universe,” “organisms,” and “geochemical systems” — and don’t get discouraged if you can’t understand technical material that one scientist wrote that only about three other scientists in the world can understand.

Items in the Science test are in multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, hot-spot, and drop-down format. In addition, the Science test includes two short answer items that are basically short essays to be completed in about ten minutes each, based on a stimulus and a response to a prompt. For additional details about what’s covered on the Science test, check out Chapter 2.

It’s a Date: Scheduling the Test

To take the GED test, you schedule it based on available testing dates. Each state or local testing center sets its own schedule for the GED test, which means that your state decides how and when you can take each section of the test. It also determines how often you can retake a failed section and how much such a retake will cost. Because a computer administers the test, many testing centers allow you to schedule an individual appointment. Your test starts when you start and ends when your allotted time is completed. The test centers are small computer labs, often containing no more than 15 seats, and actual testing facilities are located in many communities in your state.

You book your appointment through the GED Testing Service (www.gedtestingservice.com). Your local GED test administrator can give you all the information you need about scheduling the test. In addition, local school districts and community colleges can provide information about local test centers in your area.



Sending a specific question or request to www.gedtestingservice.com may come with a charge for the service. To save money, you’re better off asking a person at your local testing center. That way, you don’t have to pay for the privilege of asking a question, and your answer will be based on rules and conditions specific to your area.

The following sections answer some questions you may have before you schedule your test date, including whether you’re even eligible to take the test, when you can take the test, and how to sign up for the test.

Determining whether you're eligible

Before you schedule your test, make sure you meet the requirements to take it. You're eligible to apply to take the GED test only if

- ✔ **You're not currently enrolled in a high school.** If you're currently enrolled in a high school, you're expected to complete your diploma there. The purpose of the GED test is to give people who aren't in high school a chance to get an equivalent high-school diploma.
- ✔ **You're not a high-school graduate.** If you're a high-school graduate, you should have a diploma, which means you don't need to take the GED test. However, you can use the GED to upgrade or update your skills and to prove that you're ready for further education and training.
- ✔ **You meet state requirements regarding age, residency, and the length of time since leaving high school.** Check with your local GED test administrator to determine your state's requirements concerning these criteria. Residency requirements are an issue because you may have to take the test in a different jurisdiction, depending on how long you've lived at your present address.

Knowing when you can take the test

If you're eligible, you can take the GED test whenever you're prepared. You can apply to take the GED test as soon as you want. Just contact your local testing center or www.gedtestingservice.com for a test schedule. Pick a day that works for you.



You can take all four sections of the GED test together. That takes about seven hours. However, the test is designed so that you can take each section separately, whenever you're ready. In most areas, you can take the test sections one at a time, in the evening or on weekends, depending on the individual testing center. If you pass one test section, that section of the GED test is considered done, no matter how you do on the other sections. If you fail one section, you can retake it at any time. The scheduling and administration of the test varies from state to state, so check with www.gedtestingservice.com or your local high-school guidance office.

Because the test starts when you're ready and finishes when you've used up the allocated time, you should be able to take it alone and not depend on other people. You may be able to find locations that offer the testing on evenings or weekends as well as during regular business hours. Even better, because you don't have to take the test with a group, you may be able to set an individual starting time that suits you.

If circumstances dictate that you must take the paper version of the test, you'll probably have to forgo the flexibility afforded by the computer. Check well in advance to see what the rules are for you.



You can also apply to take the test if you're not prepared, but if you do that, you don't stand a very good chance of passing. If you do need to retake any section of the test, use your time before your next test date to get ready. The rules vary by state, but generally, you can retake the test three times in a year without waiting, but after the third failed attempt you must wait 60 days. In most jurisdictions, taking the test costs money (check with your local testing center to find out specifics for your area). The GED Testing Service does offer a discounted retake up to twice a year, but these promotions change. Some states include free retakes in the price of the test. Check with the GED Testing Service or your state to find out what special discounts may be available. To save time and money, prepare well before you schedule the test. Refer to the later section "Retaking the test(s) if you score poorly" for details.

Are special accommodations available?

If you need to complete the test on paper or have a disability that makes it impossible for you to use the computer, your needs can be accommodated. However, other specifics apply: Your choice of times and testing locations may be much more restricted, but times to complete a test may be extended. Remember also that if accommodation is required, the GED testing centers will ask for documentation of the nature of the accommodation required.

The GED testing centers make every effort to ensure that all qualified people have access to the tests. If you have a disability, you may not be able to register for the tests and take them the same week, but, with some advanced planning, you can probably take the tests when you're ready. Here's what you need to do:

- ✓ Check with your local testing center or check out www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/accommodations-for-disability.
- ✓ Contact the GED Testing Service or your local GED test center and explain your disability.
- ✓ Request any forms that you have to fill out for your special circumstances.
- ✓ Ensure that you have a recent diagnosis by a physician or other qualified professional.
- ✓ Complete all the proper forms and submit them with a medical or professional diagnosis.
- ✓ Start planning early so that you're able to take the tests when you're ready.

Note that, regardless of your disability, you still have to be able to handle the mental and emotional demands of the test.

The GED Testing Service in Washington, D.C., defines specific disabilities, such as the following, for which it may make special accommodations, provided the disability severely limits your ability to perform essential skills required to pass the GED test:

- ✓ Medical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or blindness
- ✓ Psychological disabilities, such as schizophrenia, major depression, attention deficit disorder, or Tourette's syndrome
- ✓ Specific learning disabilities, including perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia

Signing up

When you're ready to sign up for the test, follow these steps:

- 1. Contact your local GED test administrator or go to www.gedtestingservice.com to make sure you're eligible.**

Refer to the earlier section "Determining whether you're eligible" for some help.

- 2. Ask the office for an application (if needed) or an appointment.**
- 3. Complete the application (if needed).**
- 4. Return the application to the proper office, with payment, if necessary.**

Testing fees vary by state, so contact your local administrator or testing site to find out the fee amount. In some states, low-income individuals may be eligible for financial assistance.

Note: You can do all this online, including submitting the payment, with your computer, tablet, or smartphone. Go to www.gedtestingservice.com to start the process.



Never send cash by mail to pay for the GED test. Most local administrators have payment rules and don't accept cash.

Working with unusual circumstances

If you feel that you may have a special circumstance that prevents you from taking the GED test on a given day, contact the GED test administrator in your area. If, for example, the test is going to be held on your Sabbath, the testing center may make special arrangements for you.



When applying for special circumstances, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- ✓ Document everything in your appeal for special consideration.
- ✓ Contact the GED test administrator in your area as early as you can.
- ✓ Be patient. Special arrangements can't be made overnight. The administrator often has to wait for a group with similar issues to gather so arrangements can be made for the entire group.
- ✓ Ask questions. Accommodations can be made if you ask. For example, allowances include extended time for various special needs, large print and Braille for visual impairments, and age (for individuals older than 60 who feel they may have a learning disability).

Taking the GED Test When English Isn't Your First Language

English doesn't have to be your first language for you to take the GED test, because it's offered in English, Spanish, and French. If you want to take the test in Spanish or French, contact your local GED test administrator to apply. However, individuals who speak another language as their first language must take the test in English.



If English, Spanish, or French isn't your first language, you must decide whether you can read and write English as well as or better than 40 percent of high-school graduates because you may be required to pass an English as a Second Language (ESL) placement test. If you write and read English well, prepare for and take the test in English. If you don't read or write English well, take additional classes to improve your language skills until you think you're ready. An English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) is also available for people who completed their education in other countries. If you're not sure of your English language skills, consider taking an ELPT to assess your language skills before taking the GED test.

For more information about the language component of the GED test, check out www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-spanish and www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-french.

In many ways, the GED test is like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) comprehension test. If you've completed the TOEFL test with good grades, you're likely ready to take the GED test. If you haven't taken the TOEFL test, enroll in a GED test-preparation course to see whether you have difficulty understanding the subjects and skills assessed on the test. GED test courses provide you with some insight into your comprehension ability with a teacher to discuss your skills and struggles.

Websites that can help you plan to take the GED test

The Internet is a helpful and sometimes scary place. Some websites are there to help you in your GED test preparation, while others just want to sell you something. You have to know how to separate the good from the bad. Here are a couple of essential websites (most are accessible through www.gedtestingservice.com):

- ✓ adulted.about.com/od/gettingyourged/a/statedged.htm links to the GED test eligibility requirements and testing locations in your state.
- ✓ usaeducation.info/Tests/GED/International-students.aspx explains GED test eligibility for foreign students.

If you're curious and want to see what's out there, type "GED test" into any search engine and relax while you try to read about 3 to 4 million results, ranging from the helpful to the misleading. We suggest leaving this last activity until after you've passed the tests. As useful as the Internet can be, it still provides the opportunity to waste vast amounts of time. And right now, you need to spend your time preparing for the test — and leave the rest until after you get your diploma.

Taking Aim at Your Target Score

To pass the GED test, you need to score a minimum of 150 on a scale of 100 to 200, and you must pass all other subjects of the test to earn your GED diploma. If you achieve a passing score, congratulate yourself: You've scored better than at least 40 percent of today's high-school graduates, and you're now a graduate of the largest virtual school in the country. And if your marks are in the honors range (score of 170 or more), you're ready for college or career training.



Be aware that some colleges require scores higher than the minimum passing score. If you plan to apply to postsecondary schools or some other form of continuing education, check with their admissions office for the minimum admission score requirements.

The following sections address a few more points you may want to know about how the GED test is scored and what you can do if you score poorly on one or more of the test sections.

Identifying how scores are determined

Correct answers may be worth one, two, or more points, depending on the item and the level of difficulty.



Because you don't lose points for incorrect answers, make sure you answer all the items on each test. After all, a guessed answer can get you a point. Leaving an answer blank, on the other hand, guarantees you a zero. The information and practice in this book provides you with the knowledge and skills you need to answer most questions on the Science section with confidence and to narrow your choices when you're not quite sure which answer choice is correct.

Retaking the test(s) if you score poorly

If you discover that your score is less than 150 on any test section, start planning to retake the test(s) and make sure you leave plenty of time for additional study and preparation. Retake the diagnostic test in Chapter 3 and carefully review the answers and explanations to determine your weaknesses and strengths. Concentrate on understanding your weaknesses and try several more GED sample tests to make sure. If none of this helps, enroll in a preparation course or a study group. Remember that you're trying to complete several years of high school in a concentrated time. Don't get discouraged.



As soon as possible after obtaining your results, contact your local GED test administrator to find out the rules for retaking the failed section of the test. Some states may require that you wait a certain amount of time and/or limit the number of attempts each year. Some may ask that you attend a preparation course and show that you've completed it before you can retake the GED. Some may charge you an additional fee. However, you need to retake only those sections of the test that you failed. Any sections you pass are completed and count toward your diploma. Furthermore, the detailed evaluation of your results will help you discover areas of weakness that need more work before repeating any section of the test.

One advantage of taking the GED test on a computer is that you can receive, within a day, detailed feedback on how you did, which includes some specific recommendations of what you need to do to improve your scores.

No matter what score you receive on your first round of the section, don't be afraid to retake any section that you didn't pass. After you've taken it once, you know what you need to work on, and you know exactly what to expect on test day.