

## Chapter 1

# Taking a Quick Glance at the GED Mathematical Reasoning Test

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**T**he 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 United States (U.S.) high-school diploma without the need for full-time attendance in either day or night school. The GED test is a recognized standard that makes securing a job or college placement easier.

The GED test complies with current Grade 12 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 what high-school seniors across the country have studied before they graduate. Employers need better-educated employees. In addition, some colleges may be uncertain of the quality of foreign credentials. The GED diploma 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 *GED Test For Dummies*, 3rd Edition (published by Wiley).

You're permitted to take the GED in sections, so you can take the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA), Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies tests in separate testing sessions. This flexibility enables you to focus your studies and practice on one section of the test at a time, and this book supports your efforts to do just that.

Ready to get started? This chapter gives you the basics of the GED Mathematical Reasoning section: 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).

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. (For guidance on how to more effectively read and comprehend content on a computer screen, check out *GED Test For Dummies*, 3rd Edition [Wiley].)



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 comprehensive transcript of your scores, similar to what high-school graduates receive. They're available online at [www.gedtestingservice.com](http://www.gedtestingservice.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 thorough 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 detailed 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.

## Reviewing the GED Mathematical Reasoning Test

The Mathematical Reasoning section presents you with two general areas of mathematics: 45 percent quantitative, consisting of problem solving involving number operations and geometrical thinking, and 55 percent algebraic problem solving. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed description of the subject matter that the Mathematical Reasoning section covers.

The computer version of the test provides an on-screen calculator for all except the first five questions. If you prefer, you can use a hand-held calculator, but the GED Testing Service is very specific about the make and model of the hand-held calculator you're allowed to use. If you bring your own hand-held calculator, you must store it in a secure location while you answer the first five questions; then you're permitted a couple of minutes to retrieve it for use on the rest of the test.



Visit [www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/calculator](http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/calculator) to view a video demonstration of the on-screen calculator provided during the test and to find out which make and model of hand-held calculator is permitted.

If you're comfortable with on-screen calculators, use the one provided. If you're not sure of your comfort level, practice using the calculator on your computer or a calculator online. If you aren't comfortable with on-screen calculators, consider purchasing the approved hand-held calculator.

Questions are presented in four formats:

- ✔ **Multiple choice:** Multiple choice provides you with four possible answers, only one of which is correct. In this book, we provide explanations for all four answers, so you understand why the right answer is correct and why the other three answer choices are incorrect. On the diagnostic test especially, this can provide you with some insight into which math skills you need to practice most.
- ✔ **Drag and drop:** Drag-and-drop items provide you with a list of possible answers, only one of which is correct. On the computer, you choose the correct answer by dragging it to a designated spot with the mouse. This is very similar to playing solitaire on the computer.
- ✔ **Fill in the blank:** Fill-in-the-blank items provide you with no answer choices. You use the keyboard to type the correct answer in the blank.
- ✔ **Hot spot:** Hot-spot items are typically used for questions that require you to plot a point on a graph or coordinate plane. If you've ever played the game Battleship on a computer, you're aware of winning points by clicking a space on the screen with your mouse. If you click the correct spot, you win. If you click anywhere else on the screen, you lose.

## *It's a Date: Scheduling the Test*

To take the GED test, you schedule it based on the 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](http://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](http://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, if you did not complete high school, you can use the GED to upgrade or update your skills and to present a diploma that shows 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](http://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, even 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](http://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. 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](http://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](http://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 state 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](http://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 allowance 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 or see [www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-spanish](http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-spanish) or [www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-french](http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/special-test-editions-french). 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.

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](http://www.gedtestingservice.com)):

- ✓ [adulted.about.com/od/gettingyourged/a/statedged.htm](http://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.html](http://usaeducation.info/Tests/GED/International-students.html) explains GED test eligibility for foreign students.

If you're curious and want to see what's out there, type in "GED test" into any search engine and relax while you try to read about millions of 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 for 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 each section: Reasoning Through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. 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, 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 Mathematical Reasoning 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 are 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.