

The Writing Process for Answering a “Constructed Response” Test Question

The GED test, along with many other tests, contains “constructed response” items which require the student to read a complex passage and write an essay answering a question about that passage. Here are the steps Pete Denzin recommends for writing an effective constructed response.

1. **First**, read and study the “prompt” – the question you must answer in your essay after reading the passage. Be sure you understand your assigned task. Keep this task in the back of your mind as you read the passage.
2. Read the whole passage. Read it critically and study it carefully with the assigned question in mind. Mark notations in the margins (if possible). Look up unknown vocabulary words (if possible). Ask questions to be sure you understand what you are reading (if possible).
3. Study the prompt again. Note key verbs and other words which tell you **what** you must do and **how** you must do it. Rewrite the question in your own words. Be certain you understand the assigned task before going further. If you don’t directly answer the assigned question, your response will earn a low score, no matter how well it is written.
4. Decide how you will answer the question. Then **brainstorm** lots of possible arguments you **might** use to **prove to a “hostile audience”** that your position is correct. **Review the reading passage and note evidence you might cite** to support your position.
5. Select approximately three of your best arguments, and order them from weakest to strongest. This will be the organization you will follow in writing your response.
6. Write a rough draft of the whole essay.
 - a. Begin with a thesis paragraph stating your position on the question. Overview the arguments you will prove to support your position. (Note: Do **not** use phrases like, “In my opinion . . .” or “I believe that . . .” These will only weaken the power of your persuasive writing.)
 - b. Next write a separate paragraph for each of your arguments. Explain the argument in detail. Prove it through logic, examples, and especially **references to the material in the reading passage**.
 - c. Conclude your essay with a final paragraph which summarizes your various arguments and shows how they have proven your position on the question. End the essay with a strong statement of your thesis.
7. Reread your essay. Have you answered all parts of the assigned question in the prompt? Check and correct your sentence structure, word usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Note: Though this outline focuses on writing constructed responses in test situations, a similar process may be used for almost any writing situation.