

# What You Need to Know to Pass the GED Exam



*Written by Marie Anderson*

The General Educational Development exam is a series of tests designed for students who did not complete high school. In all 50 states and Canada, it is accepted by colleges and employers as equivalent to a high school diploma. Over 18 million people have completed the tests in order to pursue higher education or reach their career goals. The tests cover basic knowledge in five core academic subjects: reading, math, science, social studies and writing.

## Reading

The reading portion of the GED exam lasts just over an hour and consists of 40 multiple choice questions. It tests your ability to be able to read, analyze and comprehend different types of literature. Fiction makes up 75 percent of the test and includes poems, drama and prose. Nonfiction makes up the other 25 percent of the reading exam and includes two selections from prose, visual and performing arts reviews and workplace or community documents.

## Math

The math portion of the GED test includes knowledge of number operations, geometry, data analysis, probability and algebra. It is a two-part exam, each part lasting 45 minutes. The majority of the test consists of multiple choice questions and roughly 20 percent are "constructed answer," which means that test takers must write their own answer or complete a graph, rather than choose from a list of possible responses. Students may use approved calculators on Part I of the math exam; calculators are not allowed on Part II.

## **Science**

Test takers have 80 minutes to complete the 50 multiple choice questions on the science portion of the GED exam. You are expected to demonstrate basic knowledge of concepts and vocabulary related to physics, chemistry, life science and Earth and space science. Some questions require test-takers to read scientific passages or include visuals such as charts, graphs and diagrams.

## **Social Studies**

The social studies portion of the GED exam is 70 minutes long and contains 50 multiple choice questions, covering United States and world history, geography, civics and government and economics. Test takers are given a selection to read and must use critical thinking skills and their knowledge of the subject matter to answer the accompanying questions. Some questions also include maps, chart, political cartoons or other visual data sources. Different versions of the social studies test are used in the United States and Canada.

## **Writing**

The GED writing test is also in two parts. The first part consists of multiple choice questions about the organization, sentence structure, mechanics and grammar found in everyday documents such as emails, resumes or reports. Part II is a 45-minute timed essay about a chosen topic. Test-takers must defend an opinion or explain their views about a given topic. Essays are scored based on focus, organization, proper development of ideas, sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice and spelling.