

Extended Response Quick Tips

How can I earn points on my written responses?

Simply attempting a written response on the Extended Response items doesn't always mean you will receive points for your work. Your responses are scored against specific criteria shown in the Extended Response Scoring Rubrics. To see a full breakdown of these criteria for RLA and Social Studies, please see the complete RLA and Social Studies Rubrics. You can also refer to the "Extended Response Answer Guidelines."

Here are a few tips for helping you earn points for your written responses:

1. **Write a complete essay.** The ER prompts are designed to give you enough information to analyze so that you can make a statement that answers the prompt and then provide evidence from the source texts to develop your ideas in your own words. If you create a very brief essay, your response may not provide enough evidence of your writing skills to receive any points. Also, fully answering an ER prompt often requires 4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each – that can quickly add up to 300 to 500 words of writing! A response that is significantly shorter could put you in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of your writing skills.
2. **Give commentary on quotations from the source texts.** While you are encouraged to cite specific evidence (phrases and even complete sentences) from the passages that accompany the prompts, you are scored on not just how well you can quote from the passages, but also on whether you can express your own thoughts about your chosen evidence. So you should explain *why* the evidence you've chosen helps you make the point you want to make. Also, if too large a portion of your response is material from the source text, you may receive a 0 because that material is someone else's writing, not yours. Copied text contributes to your score only if you fully explain how that text illustrates a point you are making. Simply lifting information from the passages isn't going to be enough to earn you points.
3. **Develop ideas.** One way to earn points on the ER items is for you to pick two or three main ideas and really explain them fully. A full explanation may require several sentences, each containing related thoughts, to fully develop a main idea. Some responses that briefly mention several ideas but do not build upon them may not score very highly.

4. **Try to save 4 or 5 minutes at the end to quickly proofread.** Written responses are not evaluated for spelling, but a quick check for the following grammar and usage issues can go a long way toward earning points:
- a. vary your sentence structures
 - b. coordinate the parts of your sentences
 - c. avoid wordiness and awkwardness
 - d. use transitional words to make your ideas logical and clear
 - e. avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments
 - f. use the right homophone to mean what you say (for example, “to,” “too” or “two)
 - g. make your subjects agree with your verbs
 - h. use the correct form of a pronoun
 - i. place your words in the correct order
 - j. capitalize appropriately
 - k. use apostrophes to make nouns possessive
 - l. use punctuation correctly