10 Steps for Tackling the RLA Prompt
on the 2014 GED® Test

1. *Read the prompt before reading the passages*

2. **Read the passages**

3. **Take notes on your wipe board-note the tab number and paragraph number for easy reference**

4. **Decide which position you think is best supported**

5. **Write a thesis statement/parrot the prompt**

6. **Plan your writing by finding at least 2-3 claims from the text. Be Specific!. If time permits, include a counterargument/4th paragraph**

7. **Build your argument with each paragraph by varying the sentence structure and using transitional words**

8. **Write a conclusion paragraph**

9. **Use appropriate grammar**

10. **Revise as necessary/time permits**

How to Take Notes:

Using your wipe board write down the following as you read:
☑ Note both authors by name [e.g. Dr. Silverton/the Glass County Gazette]
☑ List studies mentioned by name and date, if provided [e.g. Congressional Budget Office, 2014, University of Michigan study]
☑ List specific statistics or details that will build your case [e.g. 3.8 million employees earn minimum wage, $2,800 increase in HH spending per year, 100,000 jobs lost]
☑ Question the credibility of the source-look for hidden motives [e.g. Ron Johnson is a tattoo artist; Leeanne Padowksi is a personel manager at a large retail store, no study date given, limited data, study date is old, emotional plea, etc.]
☑ Be sure to note the tab number and paragraph number for easy reference
☑ Note any unclear or conflicting evidence
☑ Highlight or write out any effective quotes you want to use
☑ Use the highlighting feature (available only on the actual test) to catalog your notes

RLA Response Checklist:

☑ Did you include a thesis statement?
☑ Did you explicitly state which side [author] you agree with/feel has the stronger argument?
☑ Did you back up your thesis statement with at least 2-3 reasons why the evidence is stronger using specific evidence from the text prompts?
☑ Did you evaluate the claim effectively and connect your analysis to your thesis?

Thesis Statement Examples

Topic: Cloud Seeding   **Prompts: A Speech and an editorial**

Thesis Statement written for cloud seeding:

Cloud seeding is a viable solution for communities as it contributes many positive benefits. <u>Dr. Silverton presents a strong argument</u> because, as she notes, cloud seeding delivers a variety of benefits for communities like drinkable water sources and power for hydroelectric dams, while the short-term risks are few.

Thesis Statement written against cloud seeding:

Cloud seeding relies on the use of chemicals that are poisonous to both humans and plants. <u>The Glass County Gazette argument makes clear</u> that we do not know the future risks these poisonous chemicals may pose. Without the benefit of more thoughtful long-term studies of cloud seeding, the health risks may prove more series and costly to clean up in the long-term, thereby outweighing any short-term benefits.

Topic: Minimum Wage   **Prompts: A Speech and an Op-Ed**

Thesis Statement written for minimum wage increases:

Earning **minimum wage** pay has made it increasingly more difficult for families, teenagers and older adults to make ends meet. In his speech, <u>Mr. Knight makes a clear and definitive case</u> for this argument and supports it with studies that show increasing the minimum wage would bolster the economy, create jobs and reduce the number of people who receive government assistance.

Thesis Statement written against minimum wage increases:

Increasing **minimum wage** pay might be a politically beneficial tactic but as Ms. Steele notes in her written opinion for the *Huntington Post*, it is bad for consumers, small businesses and the

economy. <u>She presents a position that is strongly supported</u> by several credible and reliable sources.

Topic: Tatoos   **Prompts: Two opposing articles**

<u>Thesis Statement written for getting tattoos:</u>

In his article about **tattoos**, Ron Johnson discusses reasons why people should consider getting a tattoo. In her article, Leeanne Padowski argues that people should avoid tattoos. Padowski's article is the better of the two since Johnson is biased, and <u>Padowski has better evidence to back her claims.</u>

<u>Thesis Statement written against getting tattoos:</u>

Tattoos in America are becoming ubiquitous. Ron Johnson's article provides proof that more Americans than ever before have tattoos and that tattoos, visible or otherwise, are not a barrier to employment. Leeanne Padowski, while offering a differing opinion, shows bias in her argument and does not provide convincing proof to the contrary.

SAMPLE THESIS FRAME EXAMPLES

The general argument made by _____in his/her work _____is that _____.

When comparing the two positions about _____ in this article, _____provides the clearest evidence that _____.

Looking at the arguments presented about _____, it is clear that _____ provides the stronger argument.

The two articles about _____ show differing opinions about _____, but _____'s argument makes a better case.

SAMPLE FRAMES THAT PARROT THE PROMPT:

Although ___[name of one author cited]_____ (believes, demonstrates, argues) that __[visible tattoos reduce employment opportunities]_, __[name of second author cited]____ supports/provides the clearest evidence.

The _[article, speech, position]__ supporting _[the topic-cloud seeding, daylight savings time, minimum wage increase, etc.]_____ provides the better supported argument/offers stronger evidence in favor/opposition to [name of the author].

Between the two stated positions, the one [in favor of/oppose to] _____[fill in with the topic discussed]___is the better supported argument/is backed up with better evidence.

EXAMPLES OF CITATIONS

- Dr. Silverton points out that cloud seeding is a nearly 70 year-old practice.
- Dr. Silverton points to the low levels of silver iodide, which are below the risk levels set by the U.S. Public Health Services
- As Dr. Silverton says, cloud seeding reduces moisture in the air reducing crop damage.
- Studies cited by Dr. Silverton--the Weather Modification Association and the American Meteorological Institute--show cloud seeding provides significant precipitation increases.

- The Glass County Gazette points out that Dr. Silverton does not discuss the reasons why people oppose cloud seeding.
- As the Gazette points out, Dr. Silverton does not discuss the dangers associated with cloud seeding technology.
- The Gazette makes the case that the chemicals used in cloud seeding are poisonous to humans and the planet.
- The Gazette cites that the Weather Modification Association is a private corporation so they may have a stake in cloud seeding as a practice.
- Gazette cites a University of Michigan study that the build-up of chemicals over time needs to be further studied. Long-term effects are not studied or known.
- Gazette also points to a 201 Australian study suggesting that the long-term environmental build-up of silver iodide and indium trioxide are unknown. Can we afford to continue pursuing this practice?

Written Response for Dr. Kathleen Silverton:

Cloud seeding is a viable solution for communities as it contributes many positive benefits. <u>Dr. Silverton presents a strong argument</u> because, as she notes, cloud seeding delivers a variety of benefits for communities with little health risks. It's a source of drinkable water reduces crop damage by reducing the size and intensity of hail and provide power source for hydroelectric dams.

Dr. Silverton, a meteorologist by trade, makes a compelling case for the benefits of cloud seeding her in speech. She points to studies conducted by the Weather Modification Association and the American Meteorological Institute that show a significant increase in rainfall (from 5 to 100%) as a result of cloud seeding. As Dr. Silverton said in her speech, this can prove to be a real benefit to communities who rely on rain for their water and power supplies.

While cloud seeding may seem controversial, as Dr. Silverton points out, it's a process that's been used to great benefit since the mid 1940's. She cites evidence from the U.S. Public Health Services, an agency that by its very name is entrusted to put the public's health first, that "…numerous studies have found no ill effects." Additionally, as she states in her speech, the levels of silver iodide are well below the risk levels set by this agency.

Lastly, Silverton makes a case for cloud seeding as a benefit to agriculture and communities since it helps to reduce moisture in the air, reducing the size of hail and keeping crop damage to a minimum. This benefits both the farmers and those who rely on the surrounding farms for food.

It would seem then, that since the practice of cloud seeding has been around for nearly 70 years that any negative health benefits that could be attributed to the chemicals used in cloud seeding would have been discovered by now. This fact is not dissected by the Glass County Gazette opinion and he/she offer no specific, significant scientific studies that bear this out. Therefore, Dr. Silverton offers the better supported argument.

<u>**Written Response for the Glass County Gazette:**</u>

Cloud seeding relies on the use of chemicals that are poisonous to both humans and plants. <u>The Glass County Gazette argument makes clear</u> that we do not know the future risks these poisonous chemicals may pose. Without the benefit of more thoughtful long-term studies of cloud seeding, the health risks may prove more serious and costly to clean up in the long-term, thereby outweighing any short-term benefits.

The writer for the Glass County Gazette points out that the chemicals used in cloud seeding are poisonous to humans and the planet. He points to two studies that suggest that the long-term effects of the chemicals could prove more dangerous and costly to clean-up. The first study is one conducted by the University of Michigan that suggests that the long-term effects should be monitored to be sure the levels of chemical buildup over time do lead to more adverse issues. A second, more recent study he cites is a 2010 Australian study. This study also indicates that the long-term environmental buildup of silver iodide and indium trioxide were "...both crucial and unknown."

It's also important to note that while Dr. Kathleen Silverton says the levels of the ammonium nitrate and silver iodide are lower than the risk levels set by the U.S. Public Health Services, she does not say anything about the level of indium trioxide, which is also a known poisonous chemical. As a professional in the field of meteorology, she may also have an inherent bias for cloud seeding.

Finally, as the writer of the Glass County Gazette states, oftentimes what appears to be a short-term remedy, in this case cloud seeding, can turn into a larger, more harmful and costly issue. He points to fossil fuels as an example. Lastly, he makes an important point by saying, "If the poison is in the does, no one yet knows what the dose of harmful chemicals from cloud seeding is." Because no long-term, continuous studies have been conducted, it's quite possible that we could find out too late that these chemicals used for producing water, pose more hazardous risks to human life. The writer of the Glass County Gazette provides the stronger, more compelling evidence against cloud seeding.