

Sample Extended Response Passages and Prompts for Classroom Practice - RLA

Help your students get ready for the extended responses on the GED® test – Reasoning Through Language Arts test by practicing with these sample prompts and source materials in the classroom.

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 your students in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of their writing skills.

Passage #1 - Are Tweens Ready for Cell Phones?

Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

Source Material #1

Speech: “Tweens” Are Ready for Cell Phones by Deborah Pendergast
“Safer Kids Summit”

Thank you for inviting me to the first “Safer Kids Summit.” We are here to discuss ways to keep our children safe in an increasingly complex world. Today’s focus is on technology—specifically on the ideal age to give kids their own cell phones. As a representative of a large telecommunications company, I receive many inquiries from parents on this topic, and this is what I tell them: It depends on the child, of course, but in general, age 10 is just about right.

A 2012 survey by the National Consumers League backs me up. The survey found that almost 60 percent of children ages 8 to 12 already have cell phones. These “tweens” can contact their parents at any time, and vice versa, giving the kids a sense of empowerment and their parents a feeling of security. Caroline Knorr, of the group Common Sense Media, says, “We want our kids to be independent, to be able to walk home from school and play at the playground without us. We want them to have that old-fashioned, fun experience of being on their own, and cell phones can help with that.” Picture the following scenario: You told your fourth-grader that you would pick her up after school, but you are stuck in traffic. She is waiting for you ...and waiting, and waiting. But if you both have cell phones, you can call her to let her know you are delayed, and she can go back inside the school, where there are adults around. You both breathe a sigh of relief.

Psychologists tell us that the period between ages 10 and 12 is one of growing independence. It is a time to teach children about responsibility, and to give them opportunities to earn our trust. Providing a 10-year-old with a cell phone offers an ideal way to achieve these goals and gives parents peace of mind as well.

Source Material #2

Speech: Wait Until They Are Older by Linda Sidner
“Safer Kids Summit”

Good morning! I come to this topic as a parent and a veteran teacher of so-called “tweens.” I love kids this age for their curiosity and energy, but those same qualities can lead to trouble if not overseen by adults. That’s why giving children their own phones actually makes them less safe, not more. I believe that the best age for a cell phone is 16, the point at which we consider kids grown-up enough to learn to drive — and even then, parents must set firm limits on phone use!

Why are tweens with phones less safe? For one thing, parents may be lulled into a false sense of security if their kids have phones. They may become careless about knowing where their child is and who he is with, thinking, “I can always reach him on his phone.” For another, cell phones give children access to all the frightening, dangerous, and inappropriate sites on the Internet, with no parent nearby to monitor this activity. But perhaps the most worrisome aspect of giving cell phones to children is the rise in “cyberbullying” or “text bullying.” Text bullying means using a cell phone to send cruel, embarrassing, or false text messages to or about someone. In one study, researcher Elizabeth Englander found that by middle school, over 90% of children report that they use their cell phones to text or go onto the Internet. She also found that in grades 3 through 5, between 14 and 19 percent of children reported being victims of cyberbullying. What if it’s your child on the receiving end of this cruelty? Or, perhaps worse, what if your child is the bully? Children of this age are simply not mature enough to handle this technology, and we shouldn’t expect them to be. It’s our job as adults to protect them. That’s why I say: It’s better to wait.

Extended Response Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the two speeches.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.