

## ESSAY

### PREPARATION FOR COMPETITION:

The Essay event in the Georgia Academic Decathlon is conducted online before state competition. Prior to competition, GAD will arrange for an online practice session. It is ***imperative*** that all students test their usernames and passwords at that time. This is also an opportunity to allow students to familiarize themselves with the program. It is advisable to have the team use the practice prompts to practice typing an essay in the time given, even though the prompts may have nothing to do with the competition. Any essay practice is useful.

The essay competition must be held on one of two dates set for the competition. Students should arrive at least 25 minutes prior to the testing time. The entire team must write at the same time, including up to three alternates. Decathletes will type an essay in response to a prompt chosen from a set given to them. Students will be given 50 minutes for writing the essay that will be scored in accordance with the published essay rubric.

Students will be given two documents as they enter: 1) the student instructions, and 2) planning paper. Place a copy of the student instructions at each computer. You might want to spend a few minutes prior to competition reviewing the instructions. **Please collect these instructions and the planning paper at the end of testing.**

The proctor **must** be someone other than the coach. There will need to be enough computers for the entire team plus additional computers in case of any problems. There will be a 60-minute window for each competition time. The student screen counts down the time remaining.

Instructions for the Coach, Proctor and Students follow. Coaches will receive any updates to these instructions via email/link prior to the state event.

### GAD Coach Online Essay Instructions - <https://usad.enlyght.com/>

#### Preparing the Technology

- Assure that ALL the computers your students are using have Internet Explorer or the newest version of Chrome (even Macs) and that your students are aware they are to use Internet Explorer only. No other screens or programs may be open during testing.
- Make sure your tech department has turned off auto-shutdown. Talk with your tech department to see if you might have problems with a restricted bandwidth.
- Only one student will be allowed per computer. There should be at least one or two extra stations in case of problems.

#### Preparing Students

- Have students practice writing timed essays on the computer.
- Show students the “GAD Online Essay Competition Overview.ppt”
- Pass out and review the “Student Essay Instructions” prior to competition so students are aware of the requirements and expectations of the essay competition.
- The practice login is imperative. Encourage students to use the practice login to familiarize themselves with the program.
- Students should arrive at least 25 minutes prior to the testing time. They will need to hear the instructions as well as make sure there are no problems. Logging in before scheduled time is **not** possible.
- There is a 60-minute window for each competition time, but students only have 50 minutes to write. The program will not allow students to write longer than 50 minutes.

## GAD Coach Online Essay Instructions cont.

### Preparing the Proctor & Practice Sign-In

- Give the proctor a list of participating students along with their usernames and passwords. The proctor must be someone other than the coach.
- Provide the proctor with all necessary materials:
  - Proctor instructions and “Troubleshooting Problems During the Essay Competition”
  - At least two sheets of blank paper and a pen/pencil per student
  - A way to contact you immediately in case of questions or problems
- Be present at the practice login to make sure the correct students get the correct usernames and passwords.
- If any students are not present for the practice login, you or the proctor will need to test their username and password for them to make sure it works. If you do have a student absent on practice day, it might be good to introduce that student to the proctor on the writing day to make sure there is no confusion.

### Competition

- Make sure the proctor can get in touch with you during competition in case of questions or prompts.
- The whole team **must** write at the same time, including any alternates.

## Proctor Essay Instructions

It is very important that students follow all instructions given aloud by you and that you understand your responsibilities.

### Preparation

- Make sure you have contact information for the coach in case of questions or problems.
- Make sure there is only one student per computer station. Students **must** use a computer for the competition.
- Students must use Internet Explorer or the newest version of Chrome (even Macs).
- Give the students their usernames and passwords (the same ones from the practice login).
- Pass out 2 sheets of blank paper and a pen/pencil to each student for them to plan on. You must pick up these papers after the competition. The paper should not leave the room with the student. No other materials should be allowed in the testing room.

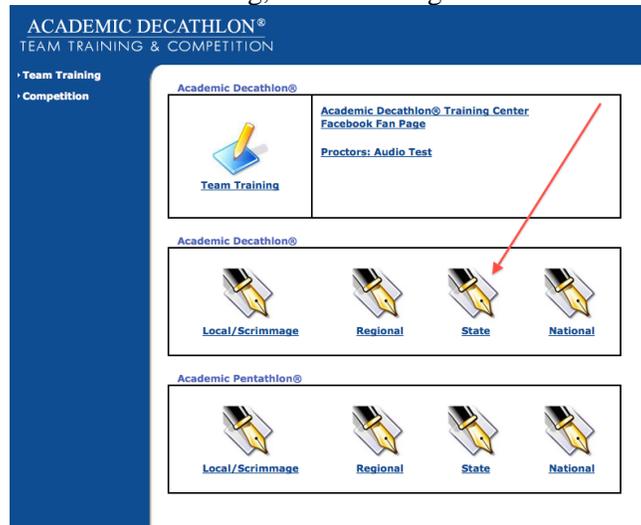
### Procedures

- Approximately 15 minutes before competition, read aloud all of the instructions.
- Remind students that they must login before beginning to plan, even if they are using the paper. Planning is part of the 50-minute time limit.
- Remind students that they should touch a key on the keyboard every 5-10 minutes, especially while they are planning so they do not get logged off. The system will log users out after 15 minutes of no activity.
- It is important to circulate the room, paying close attention to the screens. No other websites, screens, or programs should be open on the computer. Also please keep an eye open for anything other than excellent (ethical) test-taking behavior.
  - In the event that a student is guilty of an infraction, allow the student to complete the test, but inform the coach of the infraction as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to inform the State Director as to the nature of the infraction in writing including the student name, coach name, school, time, and nature of the infraction.
- Do not leave the testing area until all essay tests have been completed and all scratch papers have been collected. The screen will give each student a 5-minute warning after 45 minutes have elapsed.

## Proctor Essay Instructions cont.

### Rules

- No hats.
- No drinks or food.
- No names, school names, or other identifying headings on the essay.
- No student is to leave the room during the testing period, except for emergencies.
- Students arriving late do **not** receive additional time for the essay.
- No talking during the testing time. The room **must be silent** until the time is called.
- No study materials in the essay room (cell phones, Palm Pilots, study cards, etc). They are to be taken and returned when the student leaves.
- Make sure that the student signs in after clicking on “State Competition” under Decathlon. (See image below) If the student password is not working, have them log out of browser and start over.



- Make sure they type the username and password exactly as it is shown. No CAPS lock.
- Problems? Close then restart Internet Explorer. Login and restart the test.
- Students should press the “Save” button frequently during the testing session.
  - If they receive the “Save Failed” message each time, close browser and try again. If you still receive the message, move to another computer.
- Students should not press the Back, Forward, Refresh, or Reload keys during writing. This will pop up a box warning them that doing so will “reload” the page. Reloading means erasing the essay!
- When the program is saving the essay, portions of the top bar will turn green. No green = No save. If it turns green and stays green, be patient. Your school’s network might be busy. If it stays green for more than one minute, close the browser and restart the essay.

### **IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS, IMMEDIATELY CALL:**

1. Norsoft (507) 388-4748 – ask for Joyce and identify yourself as a GAD competition school
2. David Mikkalson (Enlyght Software) (941) 544-7030
3. Amy Tait (GAD Essay Coordinator) (706) 968-9419

**Please do not leave messages. Please hang up and continue to call until answered.**

Thank you for your assistance in making this a great experience for all!

## STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS:

<https://usad.enlyght.com/> Click on “State Competition” under Academic Decathlon for practice and competition.

### Basic Essay Instructions:

You have been given **3 prompts** from which you will **select 1 as the topic** for your essay. Do **not** write your name or prompt on your essay. It is **not** necessary to include the quotation or language from the prompt in the body of your essay.

Explain the meaning of the prompt and support your position in several well-developed paragraphs with specific examples from your experiences and/or your reading. Provide a final paragraph that offers a logical conclusion to your essay. Be sure to include adequate transitions between your ideas; and follow the accepted rules of standard English sentence structure, usage, spelling, and punctuation. Allow yourself time for proofreading and correcting your essay.

You will be graded on your ability to:

1. Organize ideas in logical patterns appropriate to the purpose of the assignment.
2. Present these ideas using effective vocabulary and written structures appropriate to formal standards of written communication in English.
3. Use mechanical skills of standard American English (*punctuation, grammar and spelling*) that facilitate communication and are acceptable in formal writing.

### Essay Reminders:

- Make sure your number is correct. ***Do not type your name, school, or prompt on your essay!***
- Select one of the prompts carefully. You may not change prompts once you begin.
- Write a well-organized essay in which you clearly respond to the question or direction that is presented in the prompt. Use specific information and examples from your studies to support your position.
- Be sure to include adequate transitions between your ideas and to follow the accepted rules of standard English sentence structure, usage, spelling, and punctuation.
- Provide a final paragraph to conclude or close your essay.
- Allow time for proofreading and editing your essay.
- You may use paper for planning, but it **must** be turned in to the proctor before you leave.

### Additional Reminders for Competition:

- No hats.
- No drinks or food.
- No names or other identifying headings on the essay.
- No student is to leave the room during the testing period, except for emergencies.
- Students arriving late do **not** receive additional time for the essay.
- No talking during the testing time. The room **must be silent** until the time is called.
- You **must** use a computer for the essay. If there is a problem, raise your hand immediately so the proctor can make the necessary changes.
- No study materials in the essay room (cell phones, Palm Pilots, study cards, etc.). They will be taken and returned when you leave.
- No other screens or programs may be open on the computer during testing.

Thank you for your assistance in making this a great experience for all.

## JUDGING ESSAYS

All essays will be written and judged online. Two judges will read each essay. A third judge will read essays when scores vary more than 200 points. Scores of the two judges in closest agreement are reported for scoring.

**Essays deemed inappropriate or in poor taste (e.g. – bad language, not related to an essay prompt) will not be read by the judges and will receive a score of zero.** The state director and the essay coordinator will determine inappropriateness of an essay. A decision regarding an “Off-prompt” essay is made by two readers.

The Essay Scantron answer sheet at the back of this section is no longer in use at State Competition since the Essay event is now held online in advance of the competition date. However, the rubric used to score the Essay event remains the same. The form is provided here as an example.

### Explanation of the USAD Rubric Domains

Following are brief explanations of each of the domains of the USAD rubric.

#### SECTION A:

**FOCUS/SCOPE:** This domain assesses how thoroughly the student addresses the given prompt and how successful he/she is in establishing a clear thesis or purpose. The student should make a specific point about a specific topic and should maintain this focus throughout his/her essay. This domain also calls for judgment on the student’s range of understanding of the given topic. In this domain the student demonstrates an awareness of task and audience; establishes and maintains a clear purpose; makes a point about a specific topic.

**ORGANIZATION:** This domain assesses the manner in which the student presents his/her ideas to the reader. This domain calls for judgment on the clarity, logic, and sequence of the ideas presented and the degree to which these ideas are developed and sustained within and across paragraphs using transitional devices. This domain also assesses the quality of the student’s introduction and conclusion and the effectiveness of these paragraphs in presenting and reinforcing the student’s main point(s). This domain shows a presence of ideas developed and sustained within and across paragraphs using transitional devices and including the introduction and conclusion.

**CONTENT/DEVELOPMENT:** This domain assesses the quality of the student’s ideas and the degree to which they are fully developed through facts, examples, anecdotes, details, opinions, statistics, reasons, and/or explanations. The reader will also assess the relevancy of the information presented to the overall focus of the essay.

#### SECTION B:

**LANGUAGE/STYLE:** This domain assesses the effectiveness and appropriateness of the student’s choice, use, and arrangement of words and sentence structures. The student’s use of language should serve to create an effective and appropriate tone and a consistent and powerful voice. The student should use language to communicate his/her ideas clearly and effectively. The reader will need to consider the student’s choice of words, range and specificity of vocabulary, as well as sentence variety.

**CONVENTIONS:** This domain assesses the correctness of the student’s grammar, mechanics (spelling, capitalization, punctuation), usage, and sentence formations.

# ESSAY

## PRACTICE ESSAY PROMPTS

Decathletes will be asked to write essays that are based on any subject area including art, music, literature, science, social science, and economics. Below are sample essay prompts that are illustrative of prompts students may encounter on the essay test.

### Instructions to Students

Do **not** write your name or prompt on your essay. It is **not** necessary to include the quotation or language from the prompt in the body of your essay.

Explain the meaning of the prompt and support your position in several well-developed paragraphs with specific examples from your experiences and/or your reading. Provide a final paragraph that offers a logical conclusion to your essay. Be sure to include adequate transitions between your ideas; and follow the accepted rules of standard English sentence structure, usage, spelling, and punctuation. Allow yourself time for proofreading and correcting your essay.

You will be graded on your ability to:

1. Organize ideas in logical patterns appropriate to the purpose of the assignment.
2. Present these ideas using effective vocabulary and written structures appropriate to formal standards of written communication in English.
3. Use mechanical skills of standard American English (*punctuation, grammar and spelling*) that facilitate communication and are acceptable in formal writing.

(The following Sample Essay Prompts are prompts that have been used in previous competitions.)

### ESSAY #1

Compare and contrast Li Po's "Sent to My Two Little Children in the East of Lu" with Ezra Pound's translation of "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter." In a well-organized essay, discuss format, narrator, imagery, and theme for both poems.

### ESSAY #2

Compare and contrast nineteenth-century European expansion in Africa and East Asia. Use details from the USAD *Social Sciences*<sup>TM</sup> *Resource Guide* to support your essay.

### ESSAY #3

Define postcolonial theory. How is the postcolonial perspective relevant in the art world today? Be sure to cite examples from the USAD *Art Resource Guide* to support your essay.