



**What you and your
child should know
about Indiana's
Graduation
Qualifying Exam**

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A DIPLOMA THAT MEANS MORE

Indiana high school graduates must meet the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) requirement in addition to earning the course credits required to qualify for an Indiana high school diploma. The GQE measures Grade 9 skills in English/language arts and mathematics.

The GQE was added to state law in 1992 by the Indiana General Assembly as a response to concerns expressed by parents, employers, and the higher education community. These groups saw that some recent graduates were leaving high school and entering the workforce and postsecondary education without the skills needed to succeed. Passing the GQE academic standard will ensure that your child has mastered the basics in reading, writing, and mathematics, and will guarantee that your child's diploma means more.

THE EMPHASIS IS ON SUCCESS

Hoosier students deserve a quality education—one that will give them the skills necessary to compete successfully in an increasingly demanding world. Identifying students who need help in reading, writing, and mathematics is an important task. By taking the GQE for the first time in the fall of their sophomore year, students who need help with basic skills and their abilities to apply basic skills can be identified while there is still time to provide them with the instructional assistance they need. Students will have at least four additional opportunities to pass the test, two times each in Grades 11 and 12.

BETTER EVALUATION LEADS TO BETTER EDUCATION

The GQE is designed to test basic and applied skills through the use of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay responses to questions and the solving of mathematical problems. By using real-life applications and asking students to show how they arrived at answers, the test results demonstrate what students know and are able to do in English/language arts and mathematics.

Indiana's GQE is a continuation of the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) program with which you and your child are familiar. The GQE consists of two sections: English/language arts and mathematics. Your child will receive separate scores on each of these two sections. Scores will reflect a student's knowledge of the subject and his or her ability to apply that knowledge. This combination of basic and applied skills makes the assessment more meaningful, accurate, and timely. It also distinguishes the Indiana GQE from many of the basic skills tests used in other states.

A WINNING COMBINATION

Indiana's high school GQE will play an important role in helping to ensure that your child receives an education that prepares him or her to face the future, but the GQE is only one piece of the equation. A quality education is a combination of many things, including skillful teaching, student interaction, attendance, academic coursework, accurate and timely evaluation, remediation, communication, and parental involvement.

It is important that you are involved in your child's education. Make sure your child understands what is expected.

WHAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW

When is the GQE taken?

The GQE will be taken in the fall of your child's sophomore year (Grade 10). The test dates are established by the Indiana State Board of Education. Completion of the GQE will take approximately 6¾ hours, and test-taking will be spread out over three days.

When will the results be available?

Test results will be provided to schools as soon as possible during the first semester. It is important for you to know that an Individual Student Report and imaged copies of your child's work on the applied skills section of the test are returned to schools to enable parents, teachers, and students to see for themselves how students performed on the applied skills items.

What are the subjects covered in the GQE?

The GQE covers basic skills, including reading ability, reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing skills, and mathematics as outlined in Indiana's Grade 9 Academic Standards.

What are Indiana's Academic Standards and how were they developed?

Indiana's *Academic Standards* include specific knowledge and skills that have been identified as necessary for students to know and be able to do to succeed in higher education and in the workplace. The *Academic Standards* were adopted by the Indiana State Board of Education after study and consideration by a group of teacher, parents, business/community leaders, administrators, and students.

Sample English/Language Arts Question

Career Plans

Economics change. Technologies change. Jobs change.

The students of today face a future full of changes. It is predicted that many of today's youth will have two or three careers in their working lives. They will have to learn new skills as the demands of the workplace change and find opportunities to switch their fields of expertise when jobs are phased out.

Indiana schools are encouraging students to learn to do career planning for themselves. Students are expected to give serious thought to careers and to making choices.

What career or career area are you working toward at the present time? What activities or jobs have you had outside of school to help prepare you for this career? What steps do you envision yourself taking in the next couple of years? How will these steps help to prepare you or to keep your options open?

Organize your thoughts into an informational summary to take to your next meeting with your guidance counselor or advisor. Explain your career goals, and tell what you have already done to move closer to those goals. Also look ahead and summarize the steps you plan to take in the next two years. Be as specific as you can.

Be sure to include

- an explanation of your career goals
- a summary of the positive steps you have already taken toward your goals, such as attending certain classes, volunteering, joining a club or organization, working part-time, being active in your neighborhood, assuming responsibilities at home, etc.
- a summary of the five steps you might take in the next two years to achieve your goals
- a thoughtful conclusion

Sample Math Question

For each roll of film, the photo shop charges \$0.18 per print plus a developing fee. The total cost to have a 24-print roll of film developed and printed is \$5.92.

Let d represent the developing fee for a roll of film. On the line below, write an equation that could be solved to find d . You do NOT have to solve the problem.

Equation _____

How are tests graded?

Tests are graded by college graduates, many of whom have advanced degrees and teaching licenses. All are trained in scoring. The scoring takes place in Indiana following strict scoring rules. Scores are based on correct answers as well as content, level of understanding of questions, and ability to communicate answers.

What is the score needed to pass the GQE?

The passing score is set by the Indiana State Board of Education, based upon recommendations by math and English teachers. The passing score in English is 466, and the passing score in mathematics is 486.

How can a student prepare for the test?

Students can best prepare for ISTEP+ or any test by keeping current with their schoolwork. Parents should attend parent-teacher conferences and be aware of how their child is doing in each course.

Does a student get only one chance to pass?

No. The door never closes on a student's opportunity to earn an Indiana high school diploma. Students have the opportunity to take the GQE one time their sophomore year and two times each their junior and senior years. If after the fifth attempt a student has not passed the GQE, the student can continue to take advantage of remediation opportunities and continue to test during GQE testing times. Once a student passes a section (i.e., mathematics or English/language arts), the student does not need to retake that section.

What extra help is available from the school for students who do not pass?

Schools receive money to provide remediation services to all students who do not score at or above the passing score. It is primarily the schools' responsibility to provide remedial assistance to students. It is, however, students' and parents' responsibility to take advantage of all offered assistance.

When a student passes the GQE, does the student still need to meet other requirements in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma?

Yes. Passing the GQE is only one requirement a student must meet in order to be eligible for an Indiana high school diploma. A student must complete all other state and local requirements needed to receive a diploma. If you have questions about the state and local requirements necessary to earn a diploma, please contact your high school guidance counselor.

What if a student earns enough credits to graduate, but does not pass the GQE?

State law provides that a student may graduate without passing the GQE if all of the following have occurred:

The student must have -

- taken the GQE in the subject area or subject areas in which the student did not achieve a passing score at least one time every school year during his or her sophomore, junior, and senior years in high school;
- completed remediation opportunities provided by the school;
- maintained a high school attendance rate of 95 percent with excused absences not counted against the student's attendance;

- maintained a “C” average in the courses that make up the 22 credits specifically required for graduation (language arts, science, social studies, mathematics, health and safety, and basic physical education); and
- obtained a written recommendation supporting the request for the appeal from the student’s teacher(s) in the subject area(s) in which the student has not achieved a passing score.

The recommendation must be agreed to by the principal of the school, and be supported by documentation that the student has attained the academic standard in the subject area, based upon tests other than the GQE or classroom work. In addition, a student must have satisfied all other state and local graduation requirements.

Note: A student who receives special education services must have the written recommendation of the case conference supporting the request for the alternate documentation from his or her teacher of record, in consultation with the teacher(s) in the subject area(s) in which the student has not achieved a passing score on the GQE. In addition, the student’s case conference committee makes the decision concerning how frequently a student will retake the GQE and completes remediation.

What if my child is enrolled in special education?

All students are required to demonstrate that they have met the achievement standards measured by the GQE in order to graduate. If your child receives instructional or testing accommodations, these should be specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. Many of these accommodations are allowed during ISTEP+

testing (though reading comprehension portions of the test can not be read to the student).

If a student's case conference committee determines that the GQE is not an appropriate test for a student, then the student should participate in an alternate assessment. Participating in an alternate assessment does not qualify a student for meeting the GQE requirement necessary to receive a diploma.

What if a student completes Core 40, but does not pass the GQE?

Completing Core 40 with a "C" or better in all directed and elective Core 40 courses along with the written recommendation of the student's high school principal is the third way to meet the GQE requirement. However, students who plan to complete Core 40 must take the GQE as sophomores and must take retests as needed.

Core 40 is the high school curriculum that prepares students minimally for college. Core 40 consists of a single, flexible high school curriculum that, except for electives, is based on a single set of agreed-upon competencies. These competencies direct the content of both college prep and tech prep courses. The difference between college prep and tech prep courses is not in content, but rather in the instructional and learning approaches of these courses. Core 40 includes a series of academically challenging courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. A student also must complete directed electives selected from foreign language, fine arts, computers, or technical career areas.

For additional information on Core 40, call the Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center (ICPAC) at 1-800-992-2076 and request a Core 40 Planner.

What if my child just isn't a good test-taker?

You can help your child deal with test anxiety by explaining that the material covered in this test deals with reading, writing, and mathematics—concepts covered in his or her daily coursework. Explain to your child that he or she will have five opportunities over three years to pass the test, and that there is an alternate documentation procedure that may be used to meet the requirement if necessary.

It is important that students realize that the GQE's mixed format will reward them for what they know instead of asking them to complete a "multiple-guess" activity. For example, in the writing section of the test, a student might use proper capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure, but incorrectly spell several words. The student would lose points for spelling, but would receive credit for those writing skills completed correctly.

What if I have additional questions about the GQE?

Your school officials will be able to answer your questions regarding students enrolled in special programs and other questions you may have about Indiana's GQE.

If you have additional questions, you may telephone the Indiana Department of Education's toll-free hot line 1-888-54-ISTEP (1-888-544-7837).

**Indiana Academic Standards Grade 9
(for testing at Grade 10)**

I. Language Arts Fundamentals

Select and apply effective strategies for reading.

- 1.1 Use meaning (semantic), structural (syntactic), and sound (phonetic) clues to construct meaning.
- 1.2 Make comparisons and predictions.
- 1.3 Use headings, pictures, captions, and other textural clues.
- 1.4 Read from and understand different points of view (not reported).
- 1.5 Make and defend judgments about quality and content of material(not reported).

Select and use developmentally appropriate strategies for writing.

- 10.6a Use the writing process—prewriting, drafting, and revising.
- 10.6b Use the writing process—editing.
- 10.7 Edit and proofread for selected punctuation and capitalization.
- 10.8 Edit and proofread for usage.
- 10.9 Edit and proofread for spelling.
- 10.10 Revise written text for clarity, coherence, economy, and voice.

Use Prior knowledge and content area information to make critical judgments.

- 10.11 Make inferences from what is read and heard.
- 10.12 Identify cause and effect relationships.
- 10.13 Identify author's/writer's purpose and perspective (main idea/theme).
- 10.14 Compare and contrast presented material.
- 10.15 Understand how language is used to influence and persuade.
- 10.16 Distinguish between fact and opinion.

II. Language Arts Applications

Comprehend developmentally appropriate materials, a broad variety of literature, magazines, and newspapers (written for a general adult audience), technical procedures (as in computer use), and routine business documents (note: Students also should be able to comprehend developmentally appropriate materials from previous grades).

10.17 Determine the literal meaning of written text.

Write for different purposes and audiences.

10.18 Produce a variety of forms including persuasive writing, synthesis and analysis of information from a variety of sources, complex forms, procedures, and directions (note: Students also should be able to write for the purposes and audiences identified for previous grades—not reported).

Recognize the interrelatedness of language and literature.

10.19 Develop criteria for judging the quality of literary works (common literary genres, literary conventions, and story structure).

I. Mathematics Fundamentals

- 10.4 Develop an understanding of basic algebraic concepts and skills, and apply those skills requiring algebraic manipulation to solve equations and inequalities (algebra).
- 10.5 Develop an understanding of elementary functions, their graphs, and their applications to the real world (functions).
- 10.6 Develop an understanding of two- and three-dimensional geometric figures as they apply to realistic problems (geometry).
- 10.7 Develop an understanding of descriptive statistics (statistics).
- 10.8 Develop an understanding of probability (probability).
- 10.9 Use computational skills and concepts with appropriate technology and/or paper and pencil to solve simple word problems (computation).

II. Mathematics Applications

- 10.1 Select and apply problem-solving methods in a realistic context (problem-solving).
- 10.2 Communicate mathematical ideas orally and in writing, as well as their power and usefulness, as they apply to the real world (communication).
- 10.3 Use inductive and deductive reasoning to solve problems (reasoning).