

Upgrade Your Writing: Building Paragraphs *Study Guide*

by
Laurie E. Rozakis, Ph.D.



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Upgrade Your Writing: Building Paragraphs

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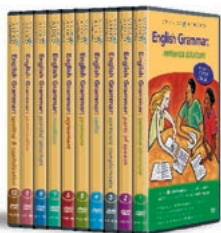
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Introduction

Video Aided Instruction's *Upgrade Your Writing* Series is like a virtual "writing clinic on DVD" that gives middle school students through adults (and challenged learners requiring remediation, in particular) the tools they need to dramatically improve their performance on any academic writing assignment or real-world writing task.

Before you begin viewing this program, please allow us to make a few recommendations. First, we suggest that you have a notebook and pen ready, so you're prepared to use the many on-screen graphics to take notes for yourself—the physical act of writing things down can help you remember them. Best of all, when you're done, you'll have a terrific resource filled with useful tips, key concepts, and easy-to-follow strategies that will help you become a better writer—all in one handy notebook that you can refer back to again and again.

Secondly, don't forget to take advantage of your "pause" button while viewing the program. This will allow you to try to complete the exercises in this study guide before you view the answers on-screen.

Finally, don't try to absorb too much at one time. By viewing the program over a number of short sessions (instead of all at once), you'll stay "fresher" and retain more of what you learn. And don't forget: you can review the entire program, or specific sections, as many times as you need to!

So now you can avoid the kind of incoherent, disorganized, and error-laden writing that inspires teachers to "break out the red pen"—you really can *Upgrade Your Writing*... let Video Aided Instruction be your guide!

About the Author

Laurie E. Rozakis, Ph.D., is a Professor of English and Humanities at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. An award-winning educator and vibrant public speaker, Dr. Rozakis is also a prolific author with more than 100 books to her credit, including numerous test prep titles for Scholastic, McGraw-Hill, and Peterson's and many books in the bestselling *Complete Idiot's Guide* series.

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PART 1: What Is a Paragraph?

Exercise 1

Directions: From the three sentences that follow the paragraph, choose the **best topic sentence** to insert at the beginning of the paragraph.

He was the son of poor Zapotec Indian farmers in Mexico. At age thirteen Juárez couldn't read, write, or speak Spanish, but he studied hard. As a young man, he became interested in social justice, especially the rights of native peoples. Juárez was very popular among the native Indian population. He became a lawyer, and in 1847, was elected governor of his state.

1. Mexico is an interesting country.
2. His many reforms made Mexico a fairer, more modern society.
3. Benito Juárez (1806–1872) is a national hero in Mexico.

Exercise 2

Directions: From the three sentences that follow the paragraph, choose the **best topic sentence** to insert at the beginning of the paragraph.

The sickness left her without sight or hearing. Because she was so young when this happened, it was hard for her to learn to communicate. Also, because she could not see, she couldn't use sign language—the language of hearing-impaired people. She also couldn't “read lips,” as many hearing-impaired people do. She was very frustrated. However, Helen Keller was extremely intelligent. With the help of a skilled teacher, she learned that everything had a name and that these names were words.

1. Helen Keller was able to learn different ways to communicate.
2. Helen Keller was a great person and an excellent role model.
3. Helen Keller was 19 months old when she became sick with fever.

Exercise 3

Directions: Identify the **topic sentence**, **supporting sentences**, and **concluding sentence** in the following paragraph.

Water is essential for life on Earth. First, water is required for photosynthesis and respiration. Second, water is crucial for human metabolism, allowing organic compounds to carry out replication. Third, water is necessary for enzyme function, especially in human digestion. Wheat may be the “staff of life,” but water is truly the “stuff of life”!

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Exercise 4

Directions: Identify the *topic sentence* in the following paragraph.

Is there something about soccer—as it is played in the United States at this time in history—that goes beyond winning and losing? The answer doesn't come from the game but from the people who play it. The wave of immigrants to the United States in the last 10–15 years has been a big part of the soccer boom. These newcomers have arrived from Central and South America, Africa, and parts of Asia. They've come from countries torn apart by war, poverty, and natural disasters.

Exercise 5

Directions: Identify the *topic sentence* in the following paragraph.

The rules of soccer are simple. Two teams of eleven players each try to get the ball into the other team's goal. You can kick the ball or use your head to move it. No one except the goalkeeper is allowed to touch the ball with hands or arms.

Exercise 6

Directions: Identify the *topic sentence* in the following paragraph.

Of course, soccer requires athletic excellence and physical stamina from its players. They have to run quickly, control the ball skillfully, kick forcefully, and pass precisely. It also requires sharp thinking and powerful teamwork; individual players and their coaches must plan carefully and communicate effectively to succeed. These are some of the many reasons why soccer is such a great sport, popular all over the world.

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PART 2: The Paragraph in Detail

Exercise 7

Directions: Identify the *details* in the following paragraph.

They're sometimes called "Frankenfoods," but some genetically modified foods have the potential to improve the lives of millions. Insects often destroy crops, resulting in devastating financial losses and starvation in developing countries. Pesticides are an effective way to kill these pests, but they damage the ecosystem and human health. Scientists have created Bt corn, genetically modified to resist insects. Since Bt corn does not require pesticides, farmers can grow more corn more cheaply and safely, which helps prevent starvation. So, despite fears to the contrary, genetically modified foods like Bt corn can be very beneficial.

Exercise 8

Directions: Identify the *type of details* that appear in the following paragraph—are they A) quotations from reliable sources; B) anecdotes; or C) statistics?

The world's population is growing very fast. In 1800, the population was about 1 billion. Now it is over 6.5 billion. One reason for this fast growth is that the birth rate is higher than the death rate. That is, there are more people being born than there are people dying. Also, medical advances and better living conditions continue to help people live longer. Scientists predict that in the year 2100, the population will be 11 billion.

Exercise 9

Directions: Identify the *type of details* that appear in the following paragraph—are they A) quotations from reliable sources; B) examples; or C) statistics?

People have always dreamed of flying. In the fifteenth century, the Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci sketched many fanciful designs of flying machines. Jetpacks have appeared in movies such as *The Rocketeer*, *Spy Kids*, and *Minority Report*. A "rocket man" even flew into the opening ceremony of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. Today, jetpacks can fly for only a short time. In the future, however, they will surely fly longer and go faster.

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Exercise 10

Directions: Identify the *type of details* that appear in the following paragraph—are they A) statistics; B) opinions; or C) quotations from reliable sources?

In 1984, Sir Alec Jeffreys discovered how to make a DNA fingerprint. It happened by accident. He had been studying the differences in human DNA. Jeffreys took pieces of DNA and marked them with a radioactive substance. Then he made images of these DNA fragments on X-ray film. When he developed the pictures, he was surprised by what he saw: patterns of dark and light bands that were not unlike the barcodes found on products at the supermarket. This famous scientist said, "I was on my own in the darkroom at 9:05 on September 10, 1984, when that pattern came up and I twigged what we had stumbled upon. Just that single bit of X-ray film threw open a door we didn't even know was there. It opened the whole science of forensic DNA."

Exercise 11

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, use the following information to *write a paragraph*. (NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.)

Use this topic sentence:

DNA fingerprinting is also being used in many other ways.

Use this concluding sentence:

As it becomes increasingly popular, DNA fingerprinting will be used for many other purposes in the future.

Use these details:

- chefs in India: to identify specific types of rice so they can then cook each type correctly
- medical researchers: to identify different strains of bacteria so they can fight food-related illnesses
- archaeologists: to help piece together the remains of the Dead Sea Scrolls
- emergency personnel: to help identify family members who have been separated from one another because of wars or natural disasters

Exercise 12

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, *write a paragraph* by turning this writing prompt into your topic sentence:

What was one cause of the French Revolution?

To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia or online resource. (NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.)

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Exercise 13

Directions: Explain why the underlined *concluding sentence* in the following paragraph is ineffective.

More than 80 kinds of birds have died out in the last 300 years; they have become extinct. Some vanished because of natural causes, such as disease or predation, but humans killed off many of them: we hunted some of the birds too much and destroyed many of their habitats. In this paragraph, I have explained reasons why some birds have become extinct.

Exercise 14

Directions: From the three sentences provided, choose the *best concluding sentence* to replace the underlined sentence in *Exercise 13*.

1. All animals are going to become extinct unless we *do something soon!*
2. I may not have discussed enough animals in danger of extinction, but I hope that you believed me anyway.
3. Read on to learn the stories behind three extinct birds, a warning for all animals in danger of disappearing.

Exercise 15

Directions: Explain why the underlined *concluding sentence* in the following paragraph is ineffective.

Spanish artist Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 to protest the brutal bombing of a town in northern Spain during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). *Guernica* had been an independent and democratic town. Around 7,000 people lived there. On April 27, 1937, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco ordered Nazi planes to bomb the town. It was 4:00 p.m. on a busy market day. About 1,750 people were killed, and 889 were injured. Picasso was shocked by the black-and-white photographs he saw in the newspapers. All of Picasso's paintings are violent.

Exercise 16

Directions: From the three sentences provided, choose the *best concluding sentence* to replace the underlined sentence in *Exercise 15*.

1. Maybe you wanted to learn more, but I gave as much information as I had, and it wasn't that easy to find facts about an old painting.
2. In this paragraph, I have shown the reasons why Picasso painted *Guernica*.
3. Picasso's famous mural shows the horror and the chaos of war.

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Exercise 17

Directions: Find and identify the *two logical fallacies* in the following paragraph, an excerpt from a speech that Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy delivered in 1950, claiming that the State Department was infested with Communists. Choose from: A) ambiguity, B) either/or fallacy, C) begging the question, and D) loaded terms.

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.

Exercise 18

Directions: Find and identify the *two sentences* that are *off the topic* in the following paragraph.

Ever hear the old cliché: “Dogs are man’s best friend”? This saying contains a nugget of truth, but for many people, a cat is their best friend. That’s because cats make excellent pets. First, many cats are affectionate. They jump into your lap and cuddle. Vet bills can be high, but that’s true of all pets. Second, most cats are also very playful. They chase toys and bells—anything you can dangle from a string, too. Last but not least, cats are clean. They can easily be trained to use a litter box. They keep themselves clean, too. My cat, a Persian named Buttons, is six years old. So when you’re next considering a new pet, consider a cat.

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Exercise 19

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, *rewrite* the following paragraph, rearranging the sentences into a logical order to create coherence. Do not add or delete any information. (*NOTE: Your answer may vary from the program.*)

Computer programmers took the word from the *Python* sketch to identify overrunning a fixed-sized buffer with too much data. How did unsolicited emails come to be called *spam*? In 1970, the British comedy show *Monty Python's Flying Circus* created a skit about a restaurant whose menu featured many different items with SPAM. As the Internet grew, the term *spam* came to include the torrent of unwanted emails. That's how *spam* went from being a luncheon meat to unwanted email! These started simply with "egg, bacon, and SPAM," but each item got sillier, building to "lobster thermidor aux crevettes with a Mornay sauce garnished with truffle pâté, brandy, and a fried egg on top and SPAM." In 1937, the Hormel Company created the word SPAM® for a new spiced ham.

PART 3: A Quick Summary

Exercise 20

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, choose any topic you like and *write a paragraph* about it that is logical, unified, coherent, and well-developed. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)