

Upgrade Your Writing: Introductions & Conclusions *Study Guide*

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Upgrade Your Writing: Introductions & Conclusions

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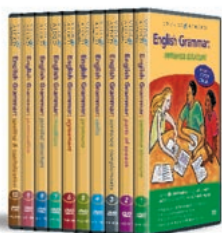
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Introduction

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: A Quick Overview

Directions: See DVD program.

PART 2: Writing Great Introductions and Conclusions

Exercise 1

Directions: Decide whether the following introductory paragraph is organized with the **topic sentence** first or last.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected as president of the United States in 1932, the country was in the grips of the Great Depression, the worst economic crisis of its existence. Banks were shut down, industries faltered, and workers lost their jobs. Farming in rural areas suffered catastrophically as crop prices fell by 40 to 60 percent. As a result, many farms failed. Mining and logging industries were also crippled as demand fell sharply. Construction was virtually halted. Few people in these industries were able to get other jobs, so they were unable to keep their homes or feed their families.

Exercise 2

Directions: Decide whether the following introductory paragraph is organized with the **topic sentence** first or last.

Some researchers theorize that when experiences reach storage in long-term memory, they have to be left unchanged for a brief period of time before they can become set. Think of this process the same way as making a handprint in plaster; when the plaster dries, your handprint is set. But while the plaster is still wet, the handprint can be wiped out with a trowel. Researchers have labeled the process of experiences having to stay undisturbed in a buffer until they become part of your long-term memory as “consolidation.”

Exercise 3

Directions: Decide whether the following introductory paragraph is organized with the **topic sentence** first or last.

People who work in teams can be classified in three main ways: leaders, followers, and blockers. The leaders pave the way by coming up with ideas and carrying them out. The followers go along with the leaders, helping to make their vision a reality. They don't initiate ideas, but are good at taking orders. The blockers, however, stand in the way of progress. They may deliberately oppose ideas by being obstinate and ornery, or they may be too lazy to carry out tasks to which they have been assigned. While each team member can assume multiple roles, typically one role predominates during interactions with others.

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Exercise 4

Directions: Decide whether the topic sentence in the following introductory paragraph is **stated** or **implied**.

Of course animals can't "talk" as humans do, but many animals are capable of creating surprisingly precise and meaningful sounds. Hens, for instance, cluck to warn their chicks of impending danger. Similarly, dogs make low, menacing growls at strangers to express distrust and protect their turf. Likewise, cats meow for food, and they yelp with pain. They may howl to attract a mate, too. People with pets often learn to read these communications with surprising accuracy.

Exercise 5

Directions: Decide whether the topic sentence in the following introductory paragraph is **stated** or **implied**.

About 2,500 years ago, the Athenians, Spartans, and Corinthians played a ball-kicking game. According to several historical sources, the Romans brought the game with them when they invaded the British Isles in the first century. The game today known as "football" in the United States can be traced directly back to the English game of rugby, although there have been many changes to the game. Football was played informally on university fields more than a hundred years ago. In 1840, a yearly series of informal "scrimmages" started at Yale University. It took more than 25 years, however, for the game to become part of college life.

Exercise 6

Directions: From the four options given, choose which one would be the **best stated topic sentence** for the paragraph in **Exercise 5**.

- A. The Romans, Athenians, Spartans, and Corinthians all played a game like football.
- B. Football is a very old game; its history stretches back to ancient days.
- C. American football comes from a British game called "rugby."
- D. Football is a more popular game than baseball, even though baseball is called "America's pastime."

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Exercise 7

Directions: Decide whether the topic sentence in the following introductory paragraph is *stated* or *implied*.

Unfortunately, Americans have discovered that many of their favorite fast foods are empty calories with little nutrition. But what about people who just can't make it through a week without some fast food? Consider pizza! Pizza contains many of the vitamins and minerals that we need. This is especially true when the pizza is made with fresh ingredients. The crust provides us with carbohydrates, an excellent low-calorie source of energy. The cheese and meat provide our bodies with the building blocks of protein. The tomatoes, herbs, onions, and garlic supply us with vitamins and minerals.

Exercise 8

Directions: From the four options given, choose which one would be the *best stated topic sentence* for the paragraph in *Exercise 7*.

- A. Many fast foods are not good for you.
- B. People should stay away from all junk food.
- C. Pizza gives us carbohydrates for energy.
- D. Pizza is healthier for you than many people think.

Exercise 9

Directions: Decide why the following introduction could be considered *ineffective*—is it: A) an *apology*, B) a *generalization*, C) *vague or unclear*, or D) a *cliché*?

The pyramids of Egypt are the most amazing ancient structures ever built. Back then, all the water for the land and its people came from the mighty Nile River. Natural barriers protected the land from invaders. Around 300 BC, when kings and other high Egyptian officials authorized the building of the first pyramids, these natural barriers protected the land from invaders. This circle of isolation allowed the Egyptians to work in peace and security. In addition, great supplies of raw materials were needed to build the pyramids. Egypt's most precious resource—the great Nile River—provided the means for transportation.

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Exercise 10

Directions: Decide why the following introduction could be considered *unsuccessful*—is it: A) an *apology*, B) a *generalization*, C) *vague or unclear*, or D) a *cliché*?

I didn't really understand the book *Frankenstein* because it was hard to read, but I'll do the best I can. The book is all about the relationship between Victor Frankenstein, a young student, and his creation, a monster which he made come alive. Frankenstein's monster spent his time desperately trying to fit in. The monster made a deal with his creator that he would run off and live in the wild, leaving Frankenstein in peace if Frankenstein would construct for him a bride to share his unusual existence. I'm not sure what happened next.

Exercise 11

Directions: Imagine that the introduction which follows was written in response to this question:

Are people correct when they say, "If you've seen one lizard, you've seen them all"?

Although all lizards are reptiles and are covered with dry and scaly skin, they can still show striking differences. In fact, almost 3,000 kinds of lizards have been identified. The dragon of Komodo stands out because of its size. The largest and oldest of all lizards, it can be 10 feet long. This fearsome lizard eats monkeys, wild boars, and even deer, which it swallows whole. In contrast, the chameleon is small enough to be held in the hand. While this lizard moves slowly, its long tongue—as long as its body—darts out like a whip and pulls insects and small birds into its mouth.

Decide what technique was used to create the topic sentence in this introduction. Did the writer use: A) a *restatement of the question*, B) a *statement of the main idea (purpose)*, C) an *anecdote*, D) *humor*, E) a *quotation*, or F) a *question*?

Exercise 12

Directions: Now let's say that the introduction which follows was written in response to this question:

Do you believe that the best teachers are "born, not made"?

What do we mean when we speak of a "born teacher"? We don't mean the boring show-offs who are interested only in displaying their collection of dry facts. Born teachers don't have to be "world famous" either, the celebrated economist or the noted biologist. Instead, a born teacher must be determined to spark each student's special talent. Most of all, the born teacher inspires students with a genuine love of life-long learning.

Decide what technique was used to create the topic sentence in this introduction. Did the writer use: A) a *restatement of the question*, B) a *statement of the main idea (purpose)*, C) an *anecdote*, D) *humor*, E) a *quotation*, or F) a *question*?

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Exercise 13

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** in response to the following question:

In what ways did Hammurabi's rise to power affect ancient Mesopotamia?

To create your topic sentence, use the technique of **restating the question**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 14

Directions: Imagine you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write a report on how the geology and terrain of a region affected its economic development.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** in response to this assignment. To create your topic sentence, use the technique of **stating your main idea (purpose for writing)**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 15

Directions: Let's say you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about Robert Peary and Matthew Henson, the first explorers to reach the North Pole.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** for this essay that uses an **anecdote**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 16

Directions: Suppose you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about maturity.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** for this essay that uses **humor**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 17

Directions: Now let's imagine you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about the importance of discretion.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** for this essay that uses a **quotation**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

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Exercise 18

Directions: Now let's imagine you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about how genes affect the anatomical development.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** for this essay that uses one or more **questions**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 19

Directions: Let's say you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about the importance of washing your hands.

On a separate piece of paper, **write an introduction** for this essay that uses **facts and statistics**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 20

Directions: Let's say you have been given the following writing assignment:

Write an essay about how violent toys do more harm than good to children.

On a separate piece of paper, **write a conclusion** for this essay. You can **restate your main idea**, **give your opinion**, **create a call for action**, and/or **reflect on the broader implications**. To locate this information, you may have to do some research by consulting an encyclopedia, dictionary, or online resource. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

PART 3: A Final Review

Directions: See DVD program.