

# Upgrade Your Writing: Overcoming Writer's Block *Study Guide*

by  
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# VIDEO AIDED instruction

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## Upgrade Your Writing: Overcoming Writer's Block

1 DVD · 1 hr. 14 mins.

item #VAI-2139 · price \$49.95

isbn 9781573852135 · upc 600459213992

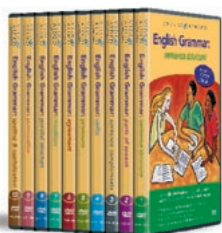
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## Upgrade Your Writing: Overcoming Writer's Block Study Guide

### 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 Writer's Block?

**Directions:** See DVD program.

## PART 2: Breaking Through Writer's Block

### Exercise 1

**Directions:** Imagine that you have been assigned an essay about atoms. On a separate piece of paper, take a few minutes to use the **LISTING** technique to do some quick prewriting about atoms in general. 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 2

**Directions:** Again, imagine that you have been assigned an essay about atoms. On a separate piece of paper, take a few minutes to use the **BRAINSTORMING** technique to do some quick prewriting about atoms in general. Simply create an unnumbered list of whatever comes to your mind about the topic, without editing for spelling, punctuation, grammar, or style. 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 3

**Directions:** Now let's say that you have been assigned an essay specifically about the history of atomic science. Take a few moments to use the **WEBBING** technique to do some quick prewriting about some of the important milestones in the history of our understanding of the atom. 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.*)

MILESTONES  
in UNDERSTANDING  
the ATOM



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## Exercise 7

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

George Eliot once said, "Animals are such agreeable friends—they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms." What is your position on this issue? Support your views with relevant reasons and examples from your experiences.

Have a **conversation** with a friend (or even by yourself) to brainstorm some ideas about this topic. On a separate piece of paper, take notes about your conversation. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

## Exercise 8

**Directions:** Pretend for a moment that you wrote the following Robert Louis Stevenson **poem**. On a separate piece of paper, **rewrite** this **poem** as a **short story**. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close behind me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

## Exercise 9

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

"Great achievements involve great risk." Agree or disagree. Construct an argument explaining your position. As you develop your argument, support your position by providing at least two examples.

Instead of writing a traditional academic essay about this topic, on a separate piece of paper, try writing about the topic in a different genre—e.g., a short story, a poem, etc. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

## Exercise 10

**Directions:** Choose an essay, paper, article, or some other piece that you've written in the past and **rewrite** one or two paragraphs from a **different point of view**. For example, if you chose a paper that was originally written from a first-person point of view, try rewriting it from a third-person point of view. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

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## Exercise 11

**Directions:** Let's say that you have been asked to write a 500-word essay based on this prompt:

Trace the causes and the effects of King Philip's War.

On a separate piece of paper, write just a small **piece** of this essay—start with the first 50 words or so. 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 12

**Directions:** Here, imagine that you have been asked to write a 350–500-word essay based on this prompt:

What do you think caused the dinosaurs to disappear from Earth? Choose a theory to support, and then compare and contrast it with at least one more theory.

On a separate piece of paper, write just one of the **middle or ending paragraphs** of this essay. 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 13

**Directions:** Suppose that you have been given the following writing prompt:

Historically, trade routes have had a significant impact on the development of a culture.  
Agree or disagree.

On a separate piece of paper, use a different method of **transcription** than you usually use to write one or two paragraphs about this topic. For example, if you typically write using a computer, try using a pen and paper. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

## Exercise 14

**Directions:** For this exercise, pretend that you have been given the following writing assignment:

Mark Twain once said, "A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read." Discuss what you think makes a book a "classic." Support your position by providing at least two examples of books that you think everyone should read.

On a separate piece of paper, write for **five minutes only** about this topic. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)

## Exercise 15

**Directions:** Let's say that you have been given the following writing prompt:

John F. Kennedy once said, "A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on."  
Agree or disagree.

Take a few minutes to **visualize** yourself writing about this topic. Then, on a separate piece of paper, write a short paragraph about this topic. (*NOTE: Your answer will vary from the program.*)