

Upgrade Your Writing: Prewriting *Study Guide*

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Video Aided Instruction, Inc.
Roslyn Heights, New York

VIDEO AIDED[®] instruction

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Upgrade Your Writing: Prewriting

1 DVD · 1 hr. 22 mins.

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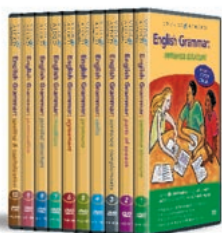
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Upgrade Your Writing: Prewriting Study Guide

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: Taking a Look at Your Assignment

Exercise 1

Directions: List the four steps in prewriting that you learned in this program.

1. considering _____
2. considering _____
3. considering _____
4. _____

Exercise 2

Directions: Identify the following as either suitable *subjects* or *topics* of quick in-class essays. Explain why you made the decisions that you did.

1. alternative fuels: _____

2. Henry Ford's development of the assembly line resulted in the mass production of cars:

3. America's legal system: _____

4. America needs a flat tax: _____

5. butterflies: _____

6. Is intelligence determined by nature or by nurture?: _____

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Exercise 3

Directions: Choose the reason why each of the following topics would most likely be *unsatisfactory* for a timed essay of approximately 500 words. Is the topic A) *too broad* and cannot be written about within the time allocated; B) *boring* or written about too often; or C) *unfamiliar* to you so you cannot write about it knowledgeably?

1. The major poets, painters, and dramatists of the Renaissance: _____
2. America should lower the drinking age: _____
3. There are many different theories to explain the disappearance of the dinosaurs: _____
4. America needs stronger gun control laws: _____
5. Nanoscale "trees" improve efficiency in low-cost plastic solar cells: _____

Exercise 4

Directions: Explain why each of the following topics would most likely be *suitable* for a timed essay of approximately 500 words.

1. Media producers should prosecute people who download copyrighted music... _____

2. Students should be placed in classes according to their academic ability, not their age...

3. Why my father is my hero... _____

4. How to solve a quadratic equation... _____

5. Golden retrievers are better pets than cocker spaniels... _____

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PART 2: Pinpointing Your Audience

Exercise 5

Directions: Identify the *primary audience* and any potential *secondary audiences* for each of the following pieces of writing.

1. in-class essay _____
2. college application essay _____
3. class newspaper _____
4. letter of complaint to a company _____
5. text message to a friend _____
6. essay on a standardized test _____
7. résumé and cover letter _____
8. posting to a social web page _____

PART 3: Identifying Your Purpose

Exercise 6

Directions: Choose the main *purpose* of each of the following topics. Is the topic most likely meant A) to *narrate*; B) to *explain*; C) to *describe*; or D) to *persuade*?

1. My mother's herb garden... _____
2. How to plant an herb garden... _____
3. Why people should cook with herbs... _____
4. The rabbit (and other creatures) in the herb garden... _____

Exercise 7

Directions: Choose the main *purpose* of the following passage. Through this passage, does the author most likely intend A) to *narrate*; B) to *explain*; C) to *describe*; or D) to *persuade*?

"Lucy, can you see it?" Mark asked.

"See what? Mark, you're scaring me." Lucy's eyes strained to make out the shadows in the dim light outside the hall window.

"Focus, honey. Just focus on the empty lot next door," Mark begged in a strangely calm voice.

"I can see the old chain-link fence," Lucy said. "What else do you want me to see?" she asked.

"The mountain. It wasn't there before," Mark responded.

"Don't be a fool. Mountains don't rise up in ten minutes," Lucy said in a quavering voice.

"When we looked out a few minutes ago, we could see the apartment building and the movie theater in the village. Where are they now?" Mark asked.

"They're... they're... oh..." Lucy trailed off.

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Exercise 8

Directions: Choose the main *purpose* of the following paragraph. Through this paragraph, does the author most likely intend A) to *narrate*; B) to *explain*; C) to *describe*; or D) to *persuade*?

The years 1594–1599 were momentous for William Shakespeare. He produced a steady stream of plays of the highest quality. He continued as a principal actor and manager in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, blessed with a stable work environment in the all-too-unstable world of the theater. As a result, he prospered financially and created a comfortable life and a solid estate. In 1599, he became part owner in the most prestigious public theater in London, the Globe.

Exercise 9

Directions: Choose the main *purpose* of the following paragraph, excerpted from a pioneer diary from the 1880s. Through this paragraph, does the author most likely intend A) to *narrate*; B) to *explain*; C) to *describe*; or D) to *persuade*?

Through the heat of this long ride, we felt our total lack of water and the meagerness of our supply of food. Our thirst became so oppressive as we were marched here from Culpeper, some four miles with scarcely a halt to rest, under our heavy loads, and through the heat and deep dust of the road, that we drank water and dipped in the brooks we passed, though it was discolored with the soap the soldiers had used for washing.

Exercise 10

Directions: Choose the main *purpose* of the following paragraph. Through this paragraph, does the author most likely intend A) to *narrate*; B) to *explain*; C) to *describe*; or D) to *persuade*?

Reading is the single most important activity that students can do. First of all, reading helps teach students important information about the world around them. It opens their minds to other points of view, too. Reading also helps students learn critical thinking skills such as analysis, making inferences, and drawing conclusions. That is why all students should have an hour of mandatory reading time every day.

PART 4: The Best Ways to Brainstorm

Exercise 11

Directions: Imagine that you have been assigned a 45-minute in-class essay. You have not been given a specific topic about which you must write. Take a few minutes to **LIST** ten topics—quickly, off the top of your head—that you might want to write about. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Exercise 12

Directions: Now suppose that you have been told to write a quick in-class essay on the assigned topic of cellphones. Take a few minutes to **LIST** some of the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of cellphones. Don't worry about organizing your list in any specific order. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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Exercise 13

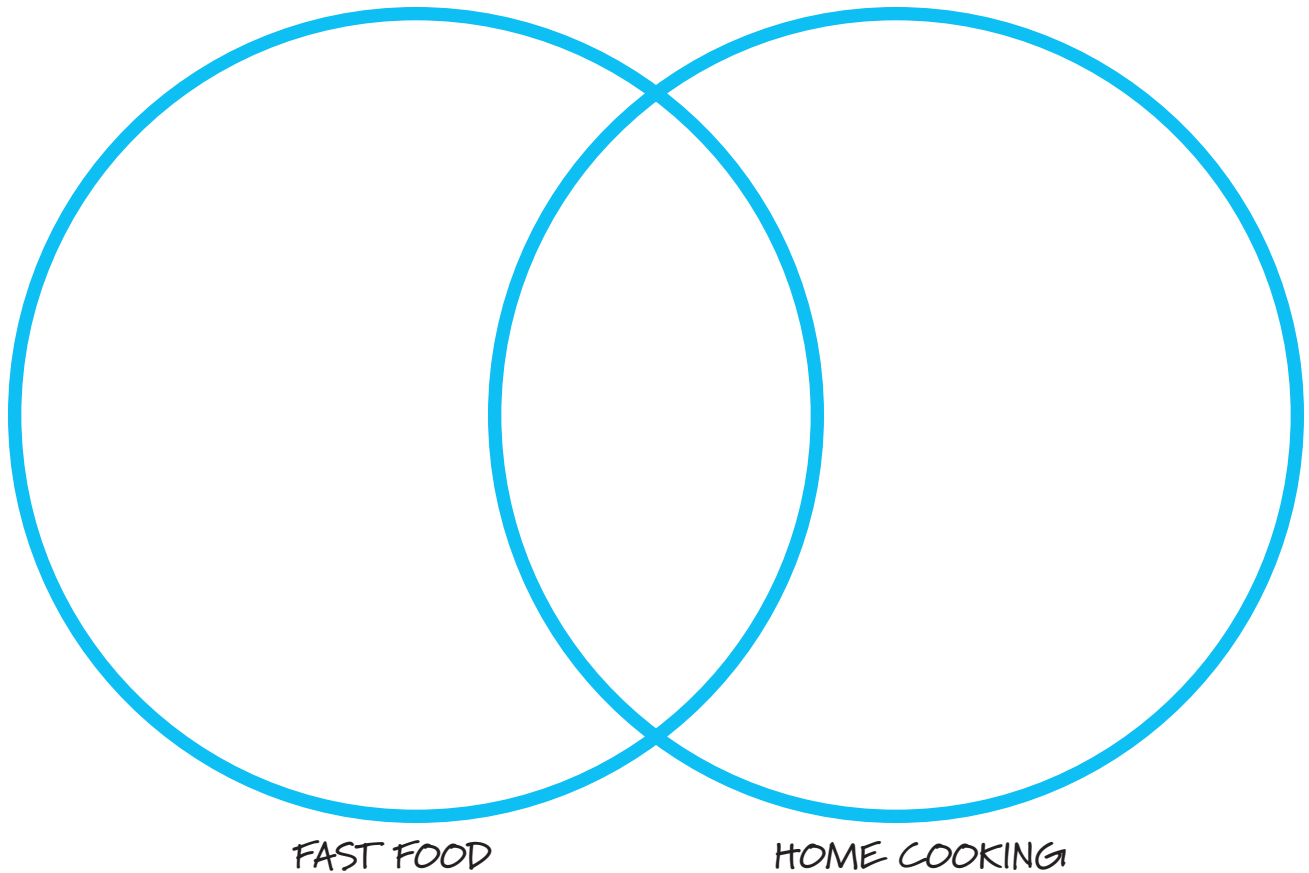
Directions: Let's say that you have been assigned an essay about school cafeteria food. Take a few minutes to create a simple **WEB** about school cafeteria food. Remember, a web is a series of words in circles or ovals that are all connected by lines to a central "hub" word (and/or each other); it's used to explore the various connections between different people, places, things, or ideas. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)



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Exercise 14

Directions: Now let's imagine that you have been assigned an essay about school lunches, comparing fast food to home cooking. Take a few minutes to create a **VENN DIAGRAM** about fast food and home cooking. Remember, a Venn diagram is a type of **CHART** with two or more overlapping circles; it's used to show how two or more categories of things are similar (in the overlapping sections) and how they are different (in the remaining sections). (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)



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Exercise 15

Directions: Now suppose that you have been assigned an essay on “The Prehistory of the United States Constitution.” You must trace five of the events, documents, governments, etc. that some historians believe had an influence on the drafting of the Constitution. Take a few minutes to create a simple **STORYBOARD** that illustrates these five items in chronological order. You may have to do some quick research to locate this information. Remember, a storyboard is a type of **CHART** in which a series of boxed sketches are connected by arrows; it’s used to show how events occurred in a specific order. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)

1. → 2. → 3. →

4. → 5.

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Exercise 16

Directions: Let's say that you have been assigned an essay that must answer the following question: "Should fast food franchises be allowed in school?" Take a few minutes to create a **TWO-COLUMN CHART** about the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of allowing fast food franchises in school. Remember, a two-column chart is a chart where each column (up-and-down section) can represent a different position on an issue and each row (side-to-side section) can describe a related aspect of the issue. It can be used to show how the various aspects of an issue can be used to support different positions on that issue. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES

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Exercise 17

Directions: Imagine that you have been assigned an essay that must address the following prompt:

Some people argue that students fail in school because of dull subject matter, poor teaching, or inadequate families. Agree or disagree.

Take 2–4 minutes to do some **FREEWRTING** about this topic. Remember, freewriting is simply writing whatever comes to your mind, without editing for spelling, punctuation, grammar, or style. (*NOTE: Your answers will vary from the program.*)

Exercise 18

Directions: Imagine that you have been assigned an essay about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Take a few minutes to use the brainstorming technique of **ASKING QUESTIONS** to establish the facts regarding this topic. You may have to do some quick research to locate this information.

WHO? _____

WHAT? _____

WHEN? _____

WHERE? _____

WHY? _____

HOW? _____

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Exercise 19

Directions: List the five methods of *brainstorming* that we have covered in this program.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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