



Cause and Effect Essay

What is a Cause and Effect Essay?

Cause and effect essays are concerned with why things happen (causes) and what happens as a result (effects). Cause and effect is a common method of organizing and discussing ideas.

Follow these steps when writing a cause and effect essay:

1. **Distinguish between cause and effect.** To determine causes, ask, "Why did this happen?" To identify effects, ask, "What happened because of this?"

The following is an example of one cause producing one effect:

Cause

You are out of gas.

Effect

Your car won't start.

Sometimes, many causes contribute to a single effect or many effects may result from a single cause. (Your instructor will specify which cause/effect method to use.)

The following are examples:

Cause

Liked business in high school
Salaries in the field are high
Have an aunt who is an accountant

Effect

Choose to major in accounting

Cause

Reduce work hours

Effect

Less income
Employer is irritated
More time to study
More time for family and friend

However, most situations are more complicated. The following is an example of a chain reaction:

Thinking about friend...forgot to buy gas...car wouldn't start...missed math exam...failed math course.

2. **Develop your thesis statement.** State clearly whether you are discussing causes, effects, or both. Introduce your main idea, using the terms “cause” and/or “effect.”
3. **Find and organize supporting details.** Back up your thesis with relevant and sufficient details that are organized. You can organize details in the following ways:
 - **Chronological.** Details are arranged in the order in which the events occurred.
 - **Order of importance.** Details are arranged from least to most important or vice versa.
 - **Categorical.** Details are arranged by dividing the topic into parts or categories.

Use appropriate transitions. To blend details smoothly in cause and effect essays, use the transitional words and phrases listed below.

For cause

Because, due to, one causes is,
Another is, since, for, first, second

For effect

Consequently, as a result, thus, resulted
in, one result is, another is, therefor

When writing your essay, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- **Remember your purpose.** Decide if you are writing to inform or persuade.
- **Focus on immediate and direct causes (or effects.)** Limit yourself to causes that are close in time and related, as opposed to remote and indirect causes, which occur later and are related indirectly.
- **Strengthen your essay by using supporting evidence.** Define terms, offer facts and statistics, or provide examples, anecdotes, or personal observations that support your ideas.
- **Qualify or limit your statements about cause and effect.** Unless there is clear evidence that one event is related to another, qualify your statements with phrases such as “It appears that the cause was” or “It seems likely” or “The evidence may indicate” or “Available evidence suggests.”

To evaluate the effectiveness of a cause and effect essay, ask the following questions: What are the causes? What are the effects? Which should be emphasized? Are there single or multiple causes? Single or multiple effects? Is a chain reaction involved?