

Cause and Effect

“Every action has an opposite and
equal reaction”

-Einstein

So what is all this cause and effect stuff ?

- You may have a topic or an assignment that shows connections between events or concepts
- For example, some colleges do not have enough classes to meet the student demand. As a result (effect) students are spending more time and money toward college than needed in the past.
- This example shows how you can argue that one event directly leads to another and so on
- You may also dig deeper into the causes of this example by finding that colleges do not have adequate budget or funding for the classes needed
- Thus, the causes and effects are both equally important in analyzing the chain of connections between events

So where do I start?

- Perhaps you can remember when you were little and you loved to play the “why” game. No matter what people said, you asked “why?” You might have asked until your parents and siblings ran out of answers or until they said “because I said so.” Well here’s your chance to play the why game again.
- Start with an idea and then ask yourself why that particular idea or event occurs. As you go along, write down your answers and then ask why again

The Why Game Example

- Original idea: Students and their families have to pay unnecessary amounts of money that is financially damaging
 - **Why?**
- Students must remain in college longer than necessary
 - **Why?**
- There are not enough classes offered to meet the demand
 - **Why?**
- There is not enough money in the budget and/or the money is spent unwisely
 - **Why?**
- Well I don't know why but it would benefit students and families if more money was put into the colleges to build new classrooms and hire more teachers
- Thus, you play the way game until you can't go any further so you can see how the events are related

The Danger in Cause and Effect

- Although there are many cause and effect relationships out there, you must make sure they are supported by facts and with a dominant idea
- Sometimes advertisements and superstitions can be misleading when it comes to cause and effect relationships...

Some commercials attempt to convince their audience that in order to be a good and worthy person, you must have their product

- So whether it's a science lab or an essay, be sure your idea is supported by evidence

So how do I organize my idea?

- There are several ways to pre-write a cause and effect essay but here is just one type of guideline to get you started
- You can use the pre-write shown on the right for any type of cause and effect essay
- Notice that the thesis is in the middle in order to remind you that even though you are connecting causes and effects, they must all tie into the dominant idea or thesis

Causes	Topic	Effects
List out your causes here and coincide them with the effects in the other column	Write your thesis here in the middle	List out the effects from the causes column

Cause and effect pre-write sample

Causes	Topic DUI	Effects
1. They think they're invincible	Thesis= Although communities are trying to eradicate drunk driving, more funding should be allocated toward educating teens about driving under any drug influence.	1. They learn the hard way that life is fragile
2. They think it won't happen to them		2. It sadly does eventually happen to them or someone they love
3. They think they are okay to drive		3. They are vulnerable and face severe consequences
4. They are afraid of their parents finding out or breaking their curfew		4. Their parents find out anyway except with a citation or at a funeral
5. They do it for attention from peers		5. They receive the wrong kind of attention at a funeral

So what do I argue?

- You can argue three different ways when you're setting up your thesis

- 1. You can argue that it's important to understand both the causes and effects in order to make an informed choice on a stance or concept

Example: It is important to analyze both the causes and effects of abortion before voting for pro-choice or pro-life.

- 2. You can argue that one event or reason is the main cause for a series of events

Example: September 11, 2001 created a series of changes in America that will alter the way Americans live their day to day lives forever.

- 3. You can argue that one event or concept is the direct effect of a series of causes

Example: Terrorism in the world is caused by a variety of events and resentments that cannot be undone or unraveled.

What does a cause and effect paper look like?

- Attached is an example essay written for an English class at Union Mine.
- Also, sample rubrics for essays are available in the “Rubric” section of this website



Any advise?

- Remember, it is not enough to state the obvious or make connections between events and concepts
- In order to create an intriguing argument that is both informative and interesting, you must show the **significance** between the causes and effects
- In other words- show how it is important information or don't bother at all