



Cause and Effect Essays

Cause and effect essays are concerned with why things happen (causes) and what happens as a result (effect). The focus of these essays is on building relationship between cause and effect; what causes certain attitudes, things and then the consequences or effects that follow. It portrays reasons and an explanation as to why certain thing happen concluding its' after effects.

Think about what are the cause and the effect in the diagram. **What causes the dominoes to fall? The man pushing the first domino. The man pushing is the cause. As a result of the man pushing the first domino, he caused a chain reaction and the dominoes will fall. The effect**

Types of cause and effect essays

Valuation: Valuation essays focus on issues of value or worth. This type of cause/effect essay deals with consequences and often includes essays that discuss the factors leading to or results/effects of a decision.

Example thesis: My teachers at Chattanooga State have forced me to evaluate my priorities, develop self-discipline, and think critically.

Interpretation: Interpretation essays explain the unknown by reference to what is known. This type of cause/effect essay begins with a known cause and projects probable effects or begins with a known effect and infers probable causes. The analysis of the

causes and effects, therefore, are generally speculative.

Example thesis: Total nuclear war would destroy modern civilization.

Analysis: Analysis essays break a subject down into its constituent parts for the purpose of understanding their function in relation to the whole. This type of cause/effect essay focuses on the major causes leading to some effect, the major effects of some cause, or cause-effect chains in order to understand the meaning of, importance of, or significance of some event, occurrence, action, or attitude.

Example thesis: The Civil War had lasting effects on the American psyche.

Synthesis: Synthesis essays explore the connections of some subject with a larger context. This type of cause/effect essay explores the broader implications to be drawn or relevance of the causes and/or effects behind some event, occurrence, action, or attitude.

Example thesis: The military decisions and policies which led to thousands of soldiers suffering months of anguish from Gulf War syndrome reveal the need for a Congressional board of inquiry into Pentagon practices.

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?

Adapted from: [The Online Writing Lab \(OWL\) at Roane State Community College](#) and UNC at Chapel Hill Writing Center.

