

Cause/Effect Essay

1- Definition

A cause and effect essay is a type of academic writing that explores the relationships between events, actions, or conditions, focusing on the reasons why something happens (the cause) and the consequences that follow (the effect), or vice versa. In essence, it aims to examine the connections between various factors and their outcomes.

Cause /effect essay is a common pattern of essay organization in academic writing. It explains why an event or a situation happened or what the consequences of an event were; it looks at the reasons, and then discusses the results. It discusses the causes (reasons) for something, the effects (results), or both causes and effects. A cause/effect essay tells how one event (the cause) leads to another event (effect). The writer uses cause/effect organization to answer typical questions.

A cause/effect essay can analyze the ways in which one or more effects result from a particular cause (focus on effect method). It can also analyze the ways in which one or more causes lead to a particular effect (focus on cause's method). In other words, the essay may focus more on the effects of a cause or more on the causes of one effect.

2- Purpose

The writing of a cause and effect essay can be used for any of the following writer's purposes:

- To examine the reasons for and the outcomes of situations. It is an attempt to discover either the origins of something, like an event or a decision, the effects that can be attributed to it or both.
- To focus on direct causes or effects. Limit one to causes that are close in time and related, as opposed to remote and indirect causes, which occur later and are related indirectly.
- To justify or condemn some actions.
- To explain or give an account of something or a situation.

3- Before Writing

The following steps may be helpful to plan for this essay:

- After selecting the topic for this type of essay, the writer's task is to determine whether the focus will be on the causes of the issue or the effects of it. This process also helps to choose and develop supporting paragraphs.
- The writer lists all the causes and/or effects s/he can think of. Then the longer list (the causes or the effects) determines the primary focus of the essay.
- Then s/he groups causes and/or effects, if there are many, into relevant and related categories such as: social, educational, political, economic, physical, emotional...
- Outline and structure for the causes/consequences or both before starting to write using a diagram.
- Write either the causes or the effects, relying on how the essay is organized. Writing the adequate thesis statement.
- The writer implies facts, statistics, examples, quotations, logic, reasoning, analysis, and interpretation for support.

4- Useful Language

In order to write successful cause and effect model, it is of paramount importance to use appropriate transitional words and expressions in addition to structure words and helpful verbs.

Transition words and phrases:

Using transitions and connectors help the piece of writing to be coherent; they make the reader easily follow the ideas. In a cause and effect essay the following transitional expressions are useful for showing causes and effects as well as the relationship between them:

To show causes, certain words and phrases signal causes which are as follows: for, for this reason, the first cause, the most important cause, because, since, as, to result from, to be the result of, due to, because of, the effect of, the consequence of, as a result of, as a consequence of, owing to, on account of, if,... unless and only / even if.

To show effects, the following effect signal words and expressions are utilized: accordingly, as a result, as a consequence, therefore, thus, then, consequently, hence, so, to result in, to cause, to have an effect on, to affect, the cause of, the reason for, for this reason, henceforth, in order to, (one) consequence of this (is that . . .), this means that . . . and thereby.

To arrange the supporting details in a clear logical order, use transitional words indicating numerical order such as: first, second, third and finally (chronological order).

Useful verbs:

The following verbs are mainly used to better describe, identify and demonstrate the reasons and consequences of many phenomena, event and trends : affect, cause, contribute to, determine, influence, lead to, make, mean, result, result in, result from, brings, make, create, describe, produce, explain, analyze, provide, state, list, argue, affirm, assert, claim, find, confirm, consider, contend, , examine, discuss, prove, disprove, insist, maintain, present, report, gives rise to, brings about, are affected, are influenced, causes, produces, +are caused by, are produced by...etc.

5- Essay Organization

In order to structure a good cause and effect essay, a set of paragraphs should be written about a particular subject that deals with the different aspects of the essay within 3 main parts.

a- Introduction

The introduction in most essays begins with a specific fact to develop a general idea or with a generality (general statement) and develops particular examples, then moves to background information about the topic to prepare for the thesis statement that comes immediately. The function of the introduction is to prepare someone to read, understand and agree with the thesis.

In the cause/effect organization, the author starts with an opening sentence related to the topic being discussed, then he drafts background sentences to point the reader toward the main idea that the essay intends to develop. These sentences are about effects in cause essay or about causes in effect essay. The thesis statement which tells the main idea of the whole essay usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph. It indicates or announces whether the essay will examine causes, effects or both. The words cause (s) or effect(s) are sometimes shown in the thesis statement, but this is not necessary if whether the cause or the effect is implied in the statement.

b- Body

While writing a cause / effect essay, the order of the main points given in the thesis statement is followed in body paragraphs. Drafting supporting paragraphs in the body is an important step in constructing a solid essay. In the body of the essay, each paragraph develops one main point that supports the thesis statement which is the topic sentence. This topic sentence presents an idea that can be tackled in one paragraph. It must support the thesis statement. All the paragraphs should directly support the thesis statement. Each paragraph usually includes three or more supporting sentences and examples which develop the topic sentence. Indeed, body paragraphs are the reasons why the thesis is true.

In cause/ effect, and cause and effect organization and structure, the writer must learn about the patterns. In a cause assignment, he starts drafting the first cause paragraph by including the following: topic sentence, major supporting sentences, quotation sentence, example or statistic sentence and finish with a conclusion which sums up the ideas in the paragraph. Then, he drafts the second cause paragraph and last the third cause paragraph with the insertion of the same previously mentioned items. Transitions within and between body paragraphs create coherence.

c- Conclusion

It is the final paragraph of the essay aimed to close the topic that has been discussed. This is done in two ways: either by referring back to the problem, question, story or quote that has been stated at the beginning of the introduction or by emphasizing the major points, in addition to reminding the audience with the thesis statement. In this type, the writer states the topic sentence, then summarizes the main points in three sentences and ends with a concluding analysis sentence that is the final thought. It is a recap of essay.