4: THE CAUSE AND EFFECT ESSAY



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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4.1: Introduction to the Cause and Effect Essay

Introduction to the Cause and Effect Essay

Many college assignments ask students to look at the causal relationships between events. Students need to explain the reasons behind an event (the causes) or the results of the event (the effects). The following are sample writing prompts from various academic disciplines that require cause-effect development.

· History: How were Native Americans on the Atlantic Coast of North America affected by the arrival of the first Europeans?

· Psychology: What factors are behind the increase in teen suicide?

· Environmental Science: What are some of the long-term environmental effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Louisiana coastal communities?

· Health: What are the effects of too much screen time on small children?

· Education: What reasons are behind the increase in lower ACT scores over the last few decades?

Key Elements Of The Cause & Effect Essay:

- Cause & Effect essays look at reasons for an event and/or the outcomes of an event. You will look at a situation and describe its causes (how the situation came about) or its effects (the situations that resulted from the event).
- Effects can be short-term or long-term. You might need to focus your essay on one or the other or both.
- Sometimes cause-effect essays describe a chain of linked events in which one effect becomes the cause of a subsequent effect which then becomes its own cause.
- Cause and effect relationships need to be clearly and directly stated using specific vocabulary and structures. There is likely to be confusion if you expect the reader to make the connections.

Objectives: By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- Identify cause and effect relationships in model essays.
- Construct clearly formulated thesis statements that show cause and effect relationships.
- Use the writing process to complete and revise a five-paragraph practice cause and effect essay.
- Combine simple sentences to create sentences expressing cause and effect relationships.
- Produce complete sentences with correct subject-verb agreement.

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4.2: Cause and Effect Model Essay 1

Read the essay and answer the questions that follow.

First Name Last Name

Professor Name

Course Name and Number

Day Month Year

Video Game Addiction

(1) Video game addiction is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, and the United States, play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games. Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many suffer detrimental effects.

(2) One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

(3) Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production and causing habitual tardiness.

(4) Finally, video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behavior pose significant danger to their overall health.

(5) In conclusion, the causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. However, just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities. Otherwise, the effects can be detrimental in many ways.

Questions about Model Essay 1

1. Find the thesis and the concluding sentences. Is this essay about causes or effects?
2. Which transitions and signal words are used to show cause & effect? NOTE: there are various sentence structures featured in this essay.
3. Find the topic sentences for each body paragraph—those are the sentences that introduce each new subtopic.
4. List the three subtopics of this essay.

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? Exercise 1

Refer back to the essay "Video Game Addiction" and complete the following outline with the missing information.

I. Introduction:

Thesis: Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many suffer detrimental effects.

II. Supporting Topic Sentence 1: One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences

A. hiding at home or an internet cafe

B. some interaction in gaming communities but breakdown in communication skills

C. _____

III. Supporting Topic Sentence 2: Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career.

A. some people don't have problems; some do

1. demerits / poor performance

2. _____

B. sleep deprivation

1. _____

2. _____

IV. Supporting Topic Sentence 3: _____

A. days without eating

B. _____

V. Conclusion: In conclusion, the causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe.

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4.3: Cause and Effect Model Essay 2

Cause and Effect Model Essay 2

Read the essay and answer the questions that follow.

First Name Last Name

Professor Name

Course Name and Number

Day Month Year

Reasons for Joining a Gym

(1) Every day the media provides more news about the benefits of exercise, and many people are responding by starting an exercise program. Some people choose to exercise at home by watching an exercise video or using resistance bands and light weights. Others prefer to go outdoors where they can walk, jog, or bike their way to health. Still others choose to join a gym. This last group has been growing over the last twenty years. Though there are many reasons for joining a gym, most people join because the gym makes exercise convenient, helps keep up motivation, and provides opportunities for social interaction.

(2) People often join gyms because a gym makes exercise convenient. First, gyms are quite popular, so there are locations just about everywhere in any city or town. They are located in shopping centers, schools, and even in many workplaces. Consequently, it is easy for people to get to a gym without going out of their way. Also, gyms have equipment such as exercise bikes, step machines, free weights, and other equipment all in one place. It is a logical choice for people who do not want to spend a lot of money on such equipment or who simply do not want to clutter their homes with it. Finally, in many gyms on-site professional trainers are available who can help members on their journey to a better body. It is clear that gyms offer many conveniences.

(3) Not only is a gym convenient, it can also motivate a person to work out. Everyone at the gym is there for the same purpose: exercise. Unlike the home environment, with its disruptions and distractions, a gym helps keep a person focused on their goal. Additionally, seeing other people make progress in their muscle gain or weight loss can be very inspiring. Finally, the price of the membership alone, especially at an expensive boutique gym, is often enough to cause someone to keep showing up for exercise. It would be a waste of money not to use the membership to its fullest. All of these things keep a person on track to their fitness goals.

(4) Finally, a number of people sign up for a gym membership because they believe it can help improve their social life. The gym can provide opportunities to meet other health-conscious people. These are different from one's family or coworkers, especially those who do not share the interest in exercise. Oftentimes gym acquaintances can develop into friendships or even romances outside the gym. In addition, most gyms have classes on training techniques, nutrition, and mental health that provide additional social interaction between gym members. Finally, gyms often provide opportunities for friendly competition between their members by organizing weight-lifting tournaments, swim meets, and basketball games.

(5) The rise of gym memberships is not surprising considering how it can be a great support to people who want to work out regularly. Not only do people find it convenient to have so many services available under one roof, they are attracted to the social interaction that the gym provides. For people who have not been successful in sticking to an exercise program on their own, the gym seems like a perfect solution.

Questions about Model Essay 2

1. Does the essay focus on causes, effects, or both?
2. Find the thesis and the concluding sentences.
3. Find transitions and signal words that show cause & effect. NOTE: there are various sentence structures featured in this essay.
4. Find the topic sentences—those are the sentences that introduce each new subtopic.
5. In what ways can a gym be motivating? Find some examples in the essay. Did the author use signal words to introduce examples?

? Exercise 2

Refer back to the essay for "Reasons for Joining a Gym" and complete the following outline with the missing information.

I. Introduction: Thesis: _____

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_____

II. Supporting Topic Sentence 1: People often join gyms because a gym makes exercise convenient.

A. Lots of locations_____

Shopping centers

_____

_____

B._____

__bikes_____

_____

_____

III. Supporting Topic Sentence 2:_____

A. __fewer distractions than at home

B. __inspiration from other people

C. _____

IV. Supporting Topic Sentence 3:_____

A. meet people with same goals

B. _____

C. _____

V. Conclusion: _____

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4.4: Cause and Effect Model Essay 3

Cause and Effect Model Essay 3

Read the following essay, fill in the blanks with suitable cause-effect signal words and phrases. See Section 4.8 for examples if you need help. Pay attention to the sentence structure to help you decide. There may be more than one correct signal word or phrase.

First Name Last Name

Professor Name

Course Name and Number

Month Day Year

The Effects of Dropping Out of High School

(1) Every year thousands of teenagers drop out of high school. Some of these teenagers are wage earners who need to contribute to the family income. For them, the immediate need of helping out financially overrides their need for a diploma. Some teenagers did not get a strong academic foundation in elementary and middle school, so the high school curriculum proves to be too challenging, which leads to frustration. They find it easier to leave school and start life as working adults. Still others become involved in illegal activities, which often include drug use. Such a lifestyle is not compatible with regular attendance and study necessary for high school success. In spite of the efforts of parents, teachers, and counselors, these teens end up leaving school to face whatever "real life" brings them. In their situations, it is difficult for them to see that leaving school will have profound effects on their finances, their ability to function in society, and even their sense of self-worth.

(2) Clearly, leaving high school without a diploma will have a negative (a) _____on a person's finances. Though there are jobs that do not require a high school diploma, these are often not suitable for the long term. Most of these are minimum-wage paying jobs, paying hourly wages that barely cover basic living expenses. Such jobs are usually in the service industry and are often physically demanding. They typically do not offer a lot of job satisfaction. Though there are some better-paying jobs that do not require a high school diploma such as utility line installers, heavy equipment operators, and communications installers, these jobs rarely (b)_____ higher-level managerial positions without a high school diploma. (c) _____, for the rest of their lives, high school dropouts are locked in jobs with little hope of significant pay increases to keep up with the cost of living or to provide for a family beyond life's basics.

(3) Dropping out of high school can also negatively (d) _____a person's ability to function as a fully participating member of society. High school math skills, which go beyond the basics, are necessary to function as an informed consumer. These skills affect good decision making about everything from home mortgages to retirement plans. The advanced reading and critical thinking skills that are part of the high school curriculum are also necessary to make good choices, whether choosing a cell phone plan or voting in local and national elections. The ability to be a fully participating member of society is severely hindered if a person lacks the skills learned in high school.

(4) Finally, a less obvious (e) _____ of dropping out of high school concerns the person's sense of self-worth. A high school diploma is considered a measure of a basic level of learning for citizens in modern societies. The vast majority of people complete this educational milestone. People who drop out, however, cannot claim this accomplishment. (f) _____, they may feel that they are not as valuable to society as others or that other people are somehow better than they are. Though this is not necessarily always the case, the lack of a diploma can lead to a lack of confidence. This could affect their interaction with other people, whether during a casual conversation when meeting new people at a party or during a high stakes job interview. High school dropouts may even feel they do not belong to a group of people with more education than they have.

(5) In short, the knowledge and skills learned in high school form a foundation for full participation in our society. Without a diploma, teens have limited opportunities financially and socially. For those who choose not to complete this degree, life will provide a series of unique challenges, so it is important that anyone thinking of dropping out really understands the consequences.

Questions about Model Essay 3

1. Find the thesis statement of this essay.

2. Does the writer focus on causes or effects?

3. Does the writer give any causes? If so, where? What are they?

4. Can you think of any additional effects?

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4.5: Organizing the Cause and Effect Essay

Organizing the Cause and Effect Essay

? Exercise 3

Check the sample below and use the following topics to brainstorm causes and effects.

Topic 1: Losing a job

Topic 2: Academic dishonesty

Topic 3: Homelessness in the U.S.

Topic 4: Stress in college students

Losing a Job: Causes and Effects

Topic: Losing a …		
Causes	**Topic: Losing a Job**	**Effects**
• Poor job performance • Dishonesty • Inability to be part of a team		• Financial difficulties • Mental Health Issues • Problems in personal relationships

Causes and Effects Chart: Blank for Practice

Causes	**Topic:**	**Effects**
•		•
•		•
•		•
•		•
•		•

When organizing a cause-effect essay, it is important to know whether you are writing mainly about the causes, the effects, or both.

The following are three common ways to organize a five-paragraph cause-effect essay.

Three Typical Cause and Effect Essay Outlines

Focus on Effects	Focus on Causes	Focus on Both Causes & Effects
I.Introduction with main cause or causes	I.Introduction with main effect or effects	I. Funnel introduction
II. First effect	II. First cause	II. Major cause
III. Second effect	III. Second cause	III. First effect
IV. Third effect	IV. Third cause	IV. Second effect
V. Conclusion	V. Conclusion	V. Conclusion

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4.6: Cause and Effect Sample Writing Process

Cause and Effect Sample Writing Process

Read the following sample of the prewriting process. You do not need to write anything-- just read through each step and pay attention to how the writer develops the topic.

Topic: Causes/Effects of Stress on College Students

Step 1: Brainstorming

Causes and Effects of Stress on College Students

Causes	Effects
• Cost of tuition • Family responsibility • Academic workload • Work demands • Sleep deprivation	• Bad grades • Health issues • Depression • Sleep deprivation

Step 2: Outlining

Outline of the Essay

Introduction: Causes of stress in college students
Subtopic #1: Family responsibility
Subtopic #2: College expenses
Subtopic #3: Academic workload
Conclusion will end with a prediction as a final thought

Step 3: Detailed Outlining

I. Introduction

Hook: _____

Background Information: _____

_____

Thesis Statement: There are many causes for college students to feel stressed.

II. Cause/Effect: Perhaps the most common reason for them to feel stressed is family responsibility.

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

III. Cause/Effect: Another cause of stress is college expenses.

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

IV. Cause/Effect: Third, the academic workload can cause students to feel stressed.

Explanation: _____

Example:_____

V. Conclusion

Restate thesis: _____

_____

Final remarks: _____

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4.7: Planning and Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

Planning and Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

Writing Practice: Choose one of the following topics to brainstorm ideas for a cause-effect essay. Then fill in the given outline below and write your first draft using the academic format.

Topic 1: During the pandemic, many people made lifestyle changes, such as diet, exercise, and activities.

Essay Topic: What change did you make and what were the reasons for it?

Essay Topic: What effects did you see in your life?

Topic 2: Did you ever know someone who was caught cheating on a school assignment (test, paper, etc.)? Why did they do it? What happened as a result?

Essay Topic: What caused the student to resort to cheating on his or her assignment?

Essay Topic: What effects did the cheating have on the student when it was discovered?

Essay Outline:

I. Introduction

Background Information:

Thesis Statement:

II. Supporting Topic Sentence 1:

A.

B.

III. Supporting Topic Sentence 2:

A.

B.

IV. Supporting Topic Sentence 3:

A.

B.

V. Conclusion:

Restate Thesis:

Final comment:

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4.8: The Language of Cause and Effect

The Language and Cause and Effect

Below are some of the most common language structures used in cause/effect writing. As you review them, pay attention to the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective) and the preposition used in each structure.

Structures to Express Causes

The Language of Cause

I. Coordinator:

for	Citizens must have a good education, for without educated voters democracy is impossible.

II. Subordinating Conjunctions:

because since as	Working students often have poor diets because their work and school schedules prevent regular meals. Since technology has proven beneficial in the classroom, more schools have dedicated money to computer labs.

III. Verbs:

to result from to be affected by to be caused by to attribute A to B to be attributed to to blame A for B	A number of childhood diseases result from improper nutrition. A child's physical development can be negatively affected by poor nutrition. Scientists attribute climate change to human activity. Some people blame immigrants for unemployment.

IV. Nouns:

to be the result of (cause) to be the effect of (cause) to be the consequence of (cause)	Effective marketing strategies are the result of good research.

V. Other Words and Structures:

due to because of as a result of to be a factor in to play a role in	Due to the years-long drought, the government put a ban on watering of lawns. Alcohol is a factor in numerous car accidents every year.

Structures to Express Effects

The Language of Effects

I. Coordinator:

so	Good students are aware of the demands of work outside of the classroom, so they plan their weekly schedules carefully.

The Language of Effects

II. Conjunctive Adverbs:

As a result, As a consequence, Consequently, Therefore, Thus, Hence,	The average temperature at the north and south poles has increased. As a result, massive amounts of ice have broken away from the ice caps.

III. Verbs:

to result in to lead to to cause to affect to impact to change to contribute to to bring about to be responsible for	Lowering the number of students in a classroom results in better learning. After school tutoring programs contribute to student success. Warmer temperatures are responsible for the melting of massive glaciers.

IV. Nouns:

to be the cause of to be the reason for to have an effect on to have an impact on	Support from a supervisor often has a positive effect on a worker's productivity.

V. Other Words and Structures:

thereby (+ gerund)	The citrus farms were severely damaged by the cold, thereby causing a sharp increase in the price of some fruits.

? Exercise 4

Read the following sentences to highlight the signal words. Underline the causes.

1. The difference between income and housing costs has created a crisis of unaffordable housing options.
2. Real estate developers purchase properties and build luxury apartments throughout the city, thereby making it difficult for residents of average income to find affordable housing.
3. Economists attribute the 2008 economic recession to the unregulated housing market.
4. Homelessness results in health conditions that make people vulnerable to contagious diseases like COVID 19.
5. Secure housing can lead to better health and emotional resilience.

? Exercise 5

Read the following sentences to highlight the signal words. Underline the effects.

1. Every year in the U.S. there are about a thousand tornadoes, thereby causing millions of dollars of damage and the death of over 70 people.

2. Tornadoes are extremely destructive and result in damaged houses, cars and businesses.

3. Strong winds in a tornado are responsible for flipping over cars or lifting them to another area.

4. Scientists have improved forecasting and warning systems for tornadoes; as a result, the number of deaths has decreased.

5. The National Weather Service monitors storms with a Doppler radar; consequently, tornado warnings can be issued in a timely manner.

Exercise 6

Fill in the blanks with appropriate signal words from the box. Pay attention to the grammar and punctuation needed to make the sentence correct.

Signal Words for Exercise 5

due to	the result of	because
contribute to	results in	a positive effect

1. Genetic variants may _____ a pattern of obesity in a family.

2. Weight gain can be _____ medications such as antidepressants.

3. Obesity _____ challenges to mental health and self-esteem.

4. Regular visits to green spaces such as parks, forests, and rural areas have _____ on people's moods and sense of well-being.

5. _____ a dangerous or polluted community environment, residents may find it difficult to engage in physical activity outside.

Exercise 7

Fill in the blanks with appropriate signal words to show the cause-effect relationship. Pay attention to the grammar and punctuation needed to make the sentence correct.

1. Many people do not have a basic understanding of how the internet works, _____ they do not know that their personal online privacy is often compromised.

2. A lot of time spent using electronic devices _____ the students' ability to socialize in a face to face environment.

3. Reading aloud to children has a positive _____ their ability to learn to read.

4. The overall health of a nation is directly linked to the health of the population. _____, governments need to take measures to ensure the people are healthy.

5. Good nutrition and mental health go hand in hand. For example, a deficiency in vitamin B9 (found in leafy greens, legumes, and grains) can _____ irritability, apathy, depression and other issues.

6. Researchers have found that the area of the brain associated with motor skills was greatly _____ in children who had regular practice of a musical instrument.

Exercise 8

The following adjectives are useful when describing the cause or effect more specifically. Choose five of the following and write a sentence that identifies a specific kind of cause or effect. Think of situations when these specific words would be appropriate.

Describing Causes and Effects

Describing the Cause	Describing the Effect
the main cause of a major cause of an underlying cause of the principal cause of a common cause of a direct link between a strong correlation between an unknown cause	a major/ significant / insignificant / profound / dramatic / serious effect on a minimal / insignificant effect on an unexpected / unforeseen / surprising effect on a lasting effect on a calming effect on

Example: A common cause of obesity is a lack of physical activity.

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

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