**Cause & Effect Essays-Hints and Tips etc.**

**Not all essays follow a 5 paragraph structure. Cause and Effect Essays are an example where this is the case.**

It is important to understand that the five-paragraph essay is not necessarily bad. However, most student writers are led to believe or falsely believe that all essays must follow the five-paragraph essay format. Just a little thought makes clear that format is very limiting and limited and does not provide an adequate organization for many types of writing assignments. Always think about the purpose and scope of your essay, so that you won't make the mistake of thinking that a 5 paragraph structure is the best way to organize your essays. Instead, student writers should see that the form of an essay (its organization) needs to match the purpose of the essay.

## Explaining Cause and Effect

Often writers are asked to explain how certain conditions or events are related to the occurrence of other conditions or events. When a writer argues that "one thing leads to another," he or she is making a cause-and-effect argument. For example, in an Economics class, students might be asked to explain the impact of increasing oil prices on the nation’s economy. Inherent in the question is the assumption that increasing oil prices is a cause, which produces specific effects in the rest of the economy. So, higher oil prices produce higher gasoline prices raising the cost of shipping goods. Higher oil prices produce higher jet fuel costs raising the cost of travel, and so on. "Higher oil prices" is the cause, and increased shipping costs and travel expenses are among the effects.

Writing tasks involving cause and effect analysis usually take one of two forms: explaining how a known cause produces specific effects; explaining how specific effects are produced by a previously unknown cause (which the writer has discovered). The second type of analysis is commonly referred to as root-cause analysis. The first type of analysis is what the technology and privacy topic requires.

To argue that certain conditions will lead to other conditions (that the loss of privacy will lead to something else), first the writer needs to define clearly what those conditions are, and then the writer needs to make clear how those conditions lead to other conditions. Finally, the writer needs to explain what this cause-and-effect relationship means. This type of essay then has five parts (not paragraphs!), with each part corresponding to a specific task the writer needs to perform, and each part consisting of one or more paragraphs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Essay Part** | **Scope** | **Purpose (not all necessary for every essay)** |
| Introduction | General | * Background for the topic
* Setting out the issues
* Focusing the argument—the purpose of the essay
 |
| Description of the "Cause" | Begins general; becomes increasingly specific | * What the specific conditions are
* Specific illustrations of these conditions
* How these specific illustrations are representative of (can stand in for) other situations

In this first part of the analysis, the writer needs to provide enough detail for the reader so the reader can understand the present situation. In addition, the writer needs to focus the description of the situation in such a way as to prepare for the "effect" that the writer is arguing for. For example, if the writer wants to argue that the loss of privacy has led to (or will lead to) a loss of individual freedom, then the description of how technology affects our privacy should focus on technologies that affect an individual’s freedom to act. |
| Description of the "Effect" | Begins general; becomes increasingly specific | * What the specific effect is (or effects are)
* How we get from the specific conditions to the specific effects
* Specific illustrations of these effects
* How these specific illustrations are representative of (can stand in for) others

In this second part of the analysis, the writer needs to walk the reader through the logical steps the writer has used to move from cause to effect. For example, if the writer argues that loss of privacy leads to loss of individual freedom, the writer needs to explain carefully how privacy and freedom are linked. So perhaps the writer might claim that privacy allows an individual to be free from the observation of others. With our privacy becoming increasingly limited by surveillance, we are no longer free from the observation of others. If we believe that we are always being watched, we will probably change our behavior and be less willing to take chances or act independently. If we feel we cannot act independently then we are no longer free.  |
| Explanation of the meaning of the cause-and-effect relationship | More General | * Why this analysis is important
* How we might act upon the ideas the writer has presented

In this third part of the analysis, the writer argues for the importance of the argument’s findings, often by putting in perspective the short-term or long-term consequences of the "effect." In addition, in this part the writer usually makes some sort of recommendation (what we should do). So if the writer is arguing that loss of privacy leads to loss of freedom, in this part the writer might speculate one what might happen if this trend towards further loss of privacy continues. In addition, the writer might describe some of the specific actions we can take to safeguard our existing privacy, or how legislation might provide such safeguards. |
| Conclusion | General | * Summing up
* How our understanding of the larger issue might be changed by the writer's analysis
* Appeal to the reader—how this situation affects us
 |

To write a cause and effect essay, you’ll need to determine a scenario in which **one action or event caused certain effects to occur**. Then, explain what took place and why! This essay allows us to identify patterns and explain why things turned out the way that they did.

**How do I choose a topic and get started?** *Try choosing a major event, either in your own life or an event of historical significance. For example, The Great Depression*.

**Cause of The Great Depression:** stock market crash

**How would we elaborate?** *We'd discuss the behaviors, carelessness, errors, and even cultural attitudes that led to the crash—explaining why it was devastating.*

**Effects of the Great Depression:** joblessness & poverty

**What should we say about the effects?**

* Businesses went under*—explain HOW the crash caused this*
* Describe poverty in detail*—explain how this could’ve been handled more efficiently or even avoided*

**Narrowing a Large Topic**

In a short essay, it might be difficult to tackle the cause and all of the many effects of a big event like the Great Depression. To narrow a cause and effect topic down to a manageable size, ask yourself…

1. What's the main (most important) cause? Most people attribute it to the **stock market crash**, so that's a good place to start.
2. Can I break the different types of effects down into categories? Yes! I'll break my ideas down into categories like: **economic, social, employment, practical, and morale effects.** (example below)
3. Which category interests me the most? "Practical effects" is the most interesting. I'll narrow the topic of my paper down so that **my essay will now be about how the stock market crash affected the practical ways that people lived their lives during the Great Depression.**

**Can that category be broken down even further to make the topic more manageable?** I'm actually interested in the ways that the Great Depression affected the farming industry. I want to talk about the new skills and methods that farmers were forced to learn and implement, as a result of their difficult situation.

**Narrowing a Large Topic - Example**

**Can I break the different types of effects down into categories? Yes!** I'll break my ideas down into categories like: **economic, social, employment, practical, and morale effects.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Economic** | **Social** | **Employment** | **Practical**  | **Morale**  |
| money loses value  | poverty increases  | jobs eliminated  | public resourcefulness increases | low self-esteem |
| companies lose value  | homelessness increases  | employers pay lower wages  | **farming techniques change** | men emasculated by job loss |
| banks lose the public's trust | orphanages fill up  | forced to work longer hours  | public wastes less, finds creative ways to save | patriotism declines |

**Structuring a Cause-and-Effect Essay**

A cause-and-effect analysis is any event, experience, or occurrence for which you want to

examine the causes and/or effects. The essay explains the cause and effect and examines

the connections between them. A cause refers to actions or circumstances that lead to a

result or consequence. An effect means the result or consequence. There are several steps

that will help you write an effective cause-and-effect essay.

**1. Establish your direction**

Decide whether you want to talk about causes, effects, or analyze both.

**2. Present a clear thesis**

Thesis should inform reader of your purpose or intention. Thesis may focus on causes, effects, or both.

**3. Follow an organizational pattern**

There are two basic ways to organize a cause-and-effect essay: chronological (time) order and emphatic order. Chronological order discusses the causes and effects in the order that they occur. Emphatic order reserves the strongest or most significant cause and/or effect until the end.

**4. Use transitions**

Transitional words help the reader follow your cause-and-effect analysis.

*As a result, As a consequence, Consequently, So, Since, As, Because, One reason why ...*

*One of the most important reasons why ... The main reasons why ... There are other reasons, too, ...*

**5. Draw a conclusion**

Restate the thesis and reach a conclusion concerning the causes and/or effects.

**Cause-and-Effect Sample**

Following below, the cause and effect essay combines both chronological and emphatic order. The details are constructed in a logical order, and the most significant effect (Santa giving pause to wars) is listed in the final paragraphs. **Note** the thesis statement which indicates the cause and effect pattern and the clear topic. You should also note the bold italicized transitions and key words that indicate the pattern of organization.

**Example Essay**

**The Santa Effect**

Long ago, a name was mispronounced by a group of English settlers in New Amsterdam, now known as New York. The Dutch name Sinterklass, a form of Sint Nicolaas, originally Saint Nicholas, became known as Santa Claus. The result of that historic mistake was a legend, and the “Santa Effect” continues to grow every year.

Santa Claus began as a Dutch folktale based on a historical figure, a bishop who used his inheritance to help the needy and the sick. According to legend, a man lost his fortune, and the loss doomed his three daughters to a life of prostitution because he could no longer provide a dowry for them. Saint Nicholas anonymously gave the man enough

gold for his daughters to keep their virtue and marry. When the bishop performed his good deed, he was supposedly dressed in a bright red cloak and matching triangular bishop’s hat. He wore soft white gloves because the weather was cold. Dutch folklore kept the generous figure in the traditional red suit but adopted furry white trim when

storytellers enhanced their version of the story. Later accounts of the tale gave the iconic appearance twinkling eyes and a sleigh for travel.

Worldwide reports of the generous figure spread as each culture tried to capture the spirit of Santa in fresh fairy tales, often adding heart-touching accounts of Christmas miracles. Therefore, as the Santa legends grew, many cultures incorporated his story into their lives as a special season, a time for good will. It is believed that because St. Nicholas died on December 6th, the season was celebrated during that month, and still is. Thus Santa’s story became a precursor to Christmas trees, stockings, letters, reindeer, “Ho, Ho’s,” gifts, carols, cards, and lights.

As a result of the legends, Santa also became the subject of books, editorials, movies, cartoons, shows, plays, and songs. Santa’s legend gave birth to such titles as: A Charlie Brown Christmas, A Christmas Carol (novel, movies, & cartoon), A Christmas Story, Frosty the Snowman, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, It’s a Wonderful Life, Jingle All the Way, Santa Clause is coming to Town, Miracle on 34th Street, National Lampoons’ Christmas Vacation, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and The Nutcracker, just to name a few. And who can forget the famous newspaper editorial, “Yes, Virginia,

there is a Santa Claus?”

Consequently, over 96% of Americans celebrate Christmas, whether they are Christian or not. In 2004, in the United Kingdom, Parliament enacted the Christmas Day Trading Act to prevent shops over 3,000 square feet from opening on Christmas Day. The act applies to both England and Wales. Santa has affected economies, customs, arts, and media in many countries all over the world. Santa has even given pause to wars.

Long ago, when a name was mispronounced by a group of English settlers in New Amsterdam, they did not know that it was the beginning of a phenomenon. The Dutch Sinterklass became Santa Claus, and the result was a legend that will continue to affect mankind for ages to come.

--Josephine Lewis

## The Desired Look: Nothing But Bones by Rebecca Patton

It seems like every little girl dreams of becoming a model. They want to be thin and pretty like the models they see on television and in magazines. Often the desire becomes an obsession and young girls see “thinness” as being a needed characteristic. For most girls, the teenage years are spent trying to acquire this look. Females are trying diets and are exercising like it is a competition to see who can lose the most weight the quickest. The obsession of many young girls over their appearance or weight has led to a growing number of people who have developed an eating disorder to try to deal with their lack of self-esteem or other related problems.

Eating disorders are a serious health problem. Personal Counseling & Resources says that eating disorders “are characterized by a focus on body shape, weight, fat, food, and perfectionism and by feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem.” Three of the most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating or compulsive eating disorder. According to Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, a person with anorexia “refuses to maintain normal body weight for age and height” and “weighs 85 percent or less than what is what is expected for age and height.” A person diagnosed with bulimia has several ways of getting rid of the calories such as binge eating, vomiting, laxative misuse, exercising, or fasting. The person might have a normal weight for their age and height unless anorexia is present. The signs of a compulsive eater include eating meals frequently, rapidly, and secretly. This person might also snack and nibble all day long. The compulsive eater tends to have a history of diet failures and may be depressed or obese (Anred.com).

There are many reasons that can contribute to the cause of eating disorders. One of the main reasons seems to be the obsession over every little pound a person is wearing. Sometimes low self-esteem or depression from any number of causes can usher in the eating disorder. Other times compulsive exercising can help shed the pounds but leave the enthused unhealthy looking.

There are other possible causes to this widely known health problem. The media bestows a great deal of beauty and thinness on television and magazines that are viewed by many people daily. Everyone has the desire to look like the actors and actresses do but, in reality, it just will not happen for most of us. Abuse, whether it be physical, emotional, or sexual, can also contribute to the development of an eating disorder (Something-Fishy.com). Such abuse to victims can leave them with a lack of trust and low self-esteem. An unfavorable relationship a person has with others is also a contributing factor to disordered eating habits. The world is so competitive that any mention from parents, siblings, peers, significant others, or co-workers about a person’s weight or appearance can lead to the onset of an eating disorder.

There really is no single reason that a person acquires an eating disorder. Many factors are considered when making a diagnosis for a person with this problem. Causes like the ones mentioned above play such an important role in eating disorders. Is it really so important that in order to look like the super models people are willing to give up food and starve themselves to death for a little satisfaction on the outside? The look of a person on the inside is what really matters.

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