

Cause and Effect Pattern Writing



Cause and Effect Essay Pattern

Causal Analysis

One of the more common patterns of analysis used today:

- article analyzing the outcome of an election
- article linking poor nutrition to low academics

Other patterns can easily merge with this format.

Cause and Effect patterns require a type of analysis, the writer breaks apart a concept: components of a story, chemical compound, or political campaign—and then investigates the different elements that make up the concept.

In this pattern a writer must:

1. identify various parts or components of your topic
2. evaluate relationships of these parts with each other or with the subject itself

Cause and Effect Essay Pattern

Oftentimes an exam-like question forces you to reply with a causal analysis:

- Americans never seem to tire of gossip and celebrity scandals.

What effect has this obsession had on the pop-American culture scene?

- Political commentators noticed numerous voters turned out in the last election.

Discuss probable causes of this strong voter turnout.

The SF Writer on pages 107-108 discusses this pattern briefly in a section devoted to writing well-structured paragraphs.

Four Approaches

Approach 1. Stay focused on primary purpose of analysis (*three options*):

- inform or explain to the reader the causes of a situation

Although parental stress is the immediate cause of child abuse, a more compelling reason for this possible behavior lies in the fact the parents themselves were abused as children.

- persuade your audience to take action concerning an aspect of your topic:

The growing number of tragic consequences of child abuse suggest the need for stronger support for more aggressive handling of such cases by social workers.

Four Approaches

- speculate to your audience possible outcomes of a situation:

Children exposed to such treatment could eventually grow up fearful and distrustful of other members of society, creating further psychological trauma throughout their own adult life or even towards other people.

Keep in mind, a longer research paper can combine all three options or use only two of them.

Four Approaches

Approach 2. Collect appropriate data; adapt it to fit your purpose and audience:

- when using an informative or speculative concept you need statistics, data, historical evidence, quotes from an authoritative speaker; strong use of formal language.
- if the persuasion approach is your primary goal, then utilize more personal experiences, personal histories, memoirs, biographies; your language would be less formal—more emotive and descriptive. You are wanting to encourage results and reactions from your opinions.

Four Approaches

Approach 3. Think beyond the expected answer.

- Multitude effects may exist; do not use your first thought without examining it thoroughly.
- Look beyond the obvious. The less obvious solutions are the more interesting ones, and are more thought-provoking. An obvious answer is expected, boring, and shows lack of research on the writer's part.
- There may be many causes for an effect.

World hunger has numerous causes depending on the global region: civil war, international war, drought, over-population, climatic change are all elements which create greater issues.

Four Approaches

Approach 4. Papers using a causal analysis are open to multiple formats:

- **causes alone:**

the most common scientific theory regarding the creation of the universe states a giant explosion resulted from a primordial dense condition at a finite time in the past, causing the present continual expansion of known space.

The author could then construct a thesis which discusses other World-origin beliefs, scientific and-or religious.

Four Approaches

- **effects alone:** contrary to popular theories, latest astronomical research shows that since the Big Bang, the known universe is expanding at an ever *increasing* pace.

The author could then analyze the ramifications of this research and show what the effects of this new evidence would hold for future physics courses.

Four Approaches

- **or use both cause and effect:** the Big Bang theory was established by Georges Lemaître a Roman Catholic priest. While it was first proposed to address the origins of a known universe, and the beginning of time, it remains a controversial discussion today for different aspects of the fields of religion, science, and philosophy.

In this case, the author would then show what caused Lemaître to arrive at his theory and the effects it had on the various academic and humanistic disciplines in the Twenties and Thirties.

Transitions

Your body paragraphs should have strong signals which indicate the format placed in your paper; *strong transitions are necessary tools in this pattern.*

- **for cause:**

another reason—

one probable reason for this—

- **for effect:**

one/a final outcome—

what results—

the developments of this action—

Organization

Choose an organizational pattern; only two types work in this pattern.

- **emphatic:** best used for persuasion pieces
- **chronological:** best used for informational

Causal Chain

Causal chains

- Sometimes your analysis can cause a chain of effects off one initial cause.

In the tenth edition of the textbook *Patterns For College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide* the editors Laurie Kirszner and Stephen Mandell use the example of a chain of logic which can be derived from the historical developments after World War II with the return of troops to the U.S. (331).

A. Initial Cause: American troops head home

which *caused* >

B. Effect (Cause)

an expansion in
the birthrate,
which *caused* >

C. Effect (Cause)

the creation of higher demand of
goods and services,
which *caused* >

D. Effect (Cause)

the baby-boom generation to emerge as a major force
in the upcoming American landscape:
political, cultural, and economic systems,
which *caused* > ...

Post hoc ergo propter hoc

Post Hoc Reasoning

Be careful when developing these chains. You must be certain that the relationships you create are utilizing clear, strong evidence which in turn supports connections based on logic and research.

You do not want to present a fallacy in your logic.

Example:

One theory for global warming is the over abundance of cattle and dairy cows in the United States.

The methane gas that develops after cows break wind rises into the atmosphere causing an over distribution of gases which in turn effects weather patterns and generates abundance of hurricane formations in the gulf and additionally causes further melting of polar ice caps.