

CHAPTER 11

Cause and Effect

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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Pollution is a major problem in our world. What causes dirty air, water, and soil? What are the results of a contaminated environment? Cause and effect writing helps to explain the answers to these types of questions.

Writers' Exchange

Your instructor will divide the class into two groups. You should work with a partner or a team of students. Your group will discuss one of the following topics.

What are some reasons that students go to college?

What effects does a college education have on a person's life?




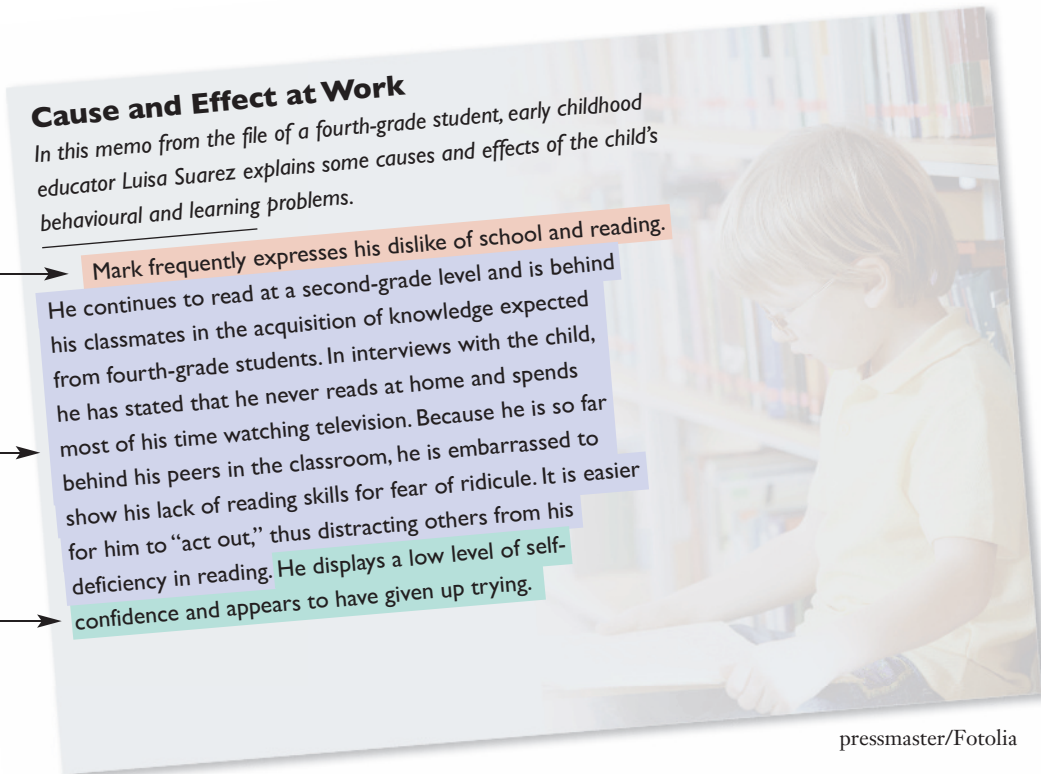
EXPLORING

What Is Cause and Effect?

Cause and effect writing explains why an event happened or what the consequences of such an event were. A cause and effect paragraph can focus on causes, effects, or both.

You often analyze the causes or effects of something. At home, you may worry about what causes your siblings or your own children to behave in a certain manner, or you may wonder about the effects of certain foods on your health. In a Canadian history course, you might analyze the causes of the Great Depression, or you might write about the effects of industrialization on Canadian society. At work, you may wonder about the causes or effects of a promotion or a pay cut.

 **Watch the Video**
Paragraph Development—
Cause and Effect
MyWritingLab



Cause and Effect at Work
In this memo from the file of a fourth-grade student, early childhood educator Luisa Suarez explains some causes and effects of the child's behavioural and learning problems.

The topic sentence expresses the main idea. → **Mark frequently expresses his dislike of school and reading.**

Supporting sentences provide details and examples. → He continues to read at a second-grade level and is behind his classmates in the acquisition of knowledge expected from fourth-grade students. In interviews with the child, he has stated that he never reads at home and spends most of his time watching television. Because he is so far behind his peers in the classroom, he is embarrassed to show his lack of reading skills for fear of ridicule. It is easier for him to “act out,” thus distracting others from his deficiency in reading. He displays a low level of self-confidence and appears to have given up trying.

The concluding sentence brings the paragraph to a satisfying close. →

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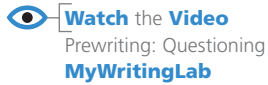
The Cause and Effect Paragraph

When you write a cause and effect paragraph, focus on two main points.

1. **Indicate whether you are focusing on causes, effects, or both.** Because a paragraph is not very long, it is often easier to focus on either causes or effects. If you do decide to focus on both causes and effects, make sure that your topic sentence announces your purpose to the reader.
2. **Ensure that your causes and effects are valid.** Determine real causes and effects, and do not simply list things that happened before or after the event. Also, verify that your assumptions are logical.

Illogical: The product does not work because it is inexpensive.
(This statement is illogical; quality is not always dictated by price.)

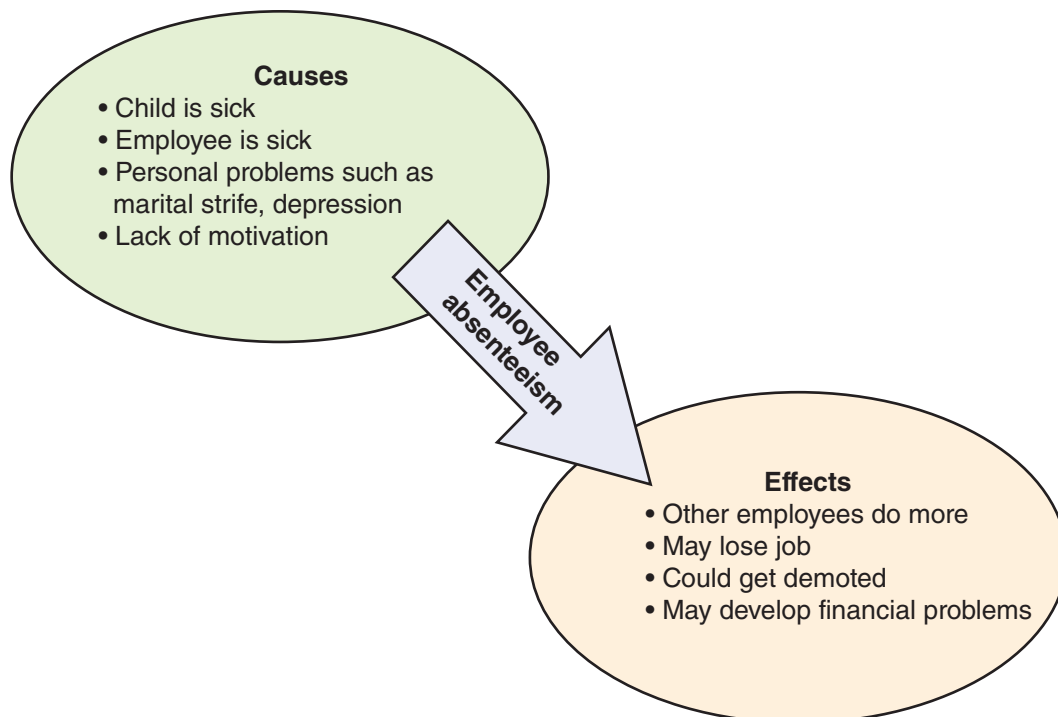
Better: The product does not work because it is constructed with poor-quality materials.



Explore Topics

In Writer's Desk: Warm Up, you will try an exploring strategy to generate ideas about different topics.

Imagine that you had to write a cause and effect paragraph about employee absenteeism. You might brainstorm and think of as many causes and effects as possible.



Grammar Hint

Do Not Confuse Effect and Affect

Generally, *affect* is used as a verb, and *effect* is used as a noun. *Affect* (verb) means “to influence or change,” and *effect* (noun) means “the result.”

verb

How will your new job affect your family?

noun

What effect will moving to a new city have on your spouse's career?

Effect can also be used as a verb that means “to cause or to bring about.” It is generally used in the following phrases: “to effect a change” and “to effect a plan.”

The union members demonstrated to effect changes in their working conditions.

The Writer's Desk Warm Up

Write some possible causes and effects for the following topics. Then decide if your paragraph will focus on causes or effects.

EXAMPLE:

Smoke-free work zones

| Causes | Effects |
|---|--|
| <u>workers complain about smoke</u> | <u>employees smoke in entrances</u> |
| <u>new legislation</u> | <u>cigarette litter outside building</u> |
| <u>lobby groups asking for smoke-free zones</u> | <u>smokers influence nonsmokers</u> |
| <u>lack of ventilation in offices</u> | <u>smokers take long breaks</u> |

Focus on: Effects

1. Cheating

| Causes | Effects |
|---------------|----------------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |

Focus on: _____

2. Popularity of fast food

| Causes | Effects |
|---------------|----------------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |

Focus on: _____

3. Teenage rebellion

| Causes | Effects |
|---------------|----------------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |

Focus on: _____

The Writer's Desk Write Topic Sentences

Write a topic sentence for each of the following topics. You can look for ideas in the previous Writer's Desk. Determine whether you will focus on causes, effects, or both in your paragraph.

EXAMPLE:

Topic: Smoke-free work zones

Topic sentence: Smoke-free work zones, implemented for obvious reasons,
have had surprising consequences for employees.

1. Topic: Cheating

Topic sentence: _____

2. Topic: Popularity of fast food


Topic sentence: _____

3. Topic: Teenage rebellion

Topic sentence: _____

The Supporting Ideas

After you have developed an effective topic sentence, generate supporting ideas. When planning a cause and effect paragraph, think of examples that clearly show the causes or effects. Then arrange your examples in emphatic order. **Emphatic order** means that you can place your examples from the most to the least important or from the least to the most important.

 **Watch the Video**
Revising the Paragraph:
Organization
MyWritingLab

Hint

Do Not Oversimplify

Avoid attributing a simple or general cause to a complex issue. When you use expressions such as *it appears that* or *a possible cause is*, you show that you are aware of the complex factors involved in the situation.

Oversimplification: The high murder rate in cities is caused by easily obtained firearms.
(This is an oversimplification of a complicated problem.)

Better: A possible cause of the high murder rate in cities is the abundance of easily obtained firearms.



Visualizing Cause and Effect

PRACTICE 2

Brainstorm supporting ideas for the following topic sentence. Explain how a dam might affect the environment.

Topic sentence: A dam has profound effects on the environment.



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The Writer's Desk Generate Supporting Ideas

Choose one of the topic sentences from the previous Writer's Desk. Then list either causes or effects.

EXAMPLE:

Topic sentence: Smoke-free work zones, implemented for obvious reasons, have had surprising consequences for employees.

Supports: polluted entrances of buildings

smokers need long breaks

smokers influence nonsmokers

Topic sentence: _____

Supports: _____

The Paragraph Plan

In many courses, instructors ask students to write about the causes or effects of a particular subject. Plan your paragraph before you write your final version. Also, think about the order of ideas. Arrange the supporting details in a logical order. As you make your plan, ensure that you focus on causes, effects, or both.

TOPIC SENTENCE: Smoke-free work zones, implemented for obvious reasons, have had surprising consequences for employees.

Support 1: Smokers stand at entrances to have their cigarettes.

Details: —drop their cigarette butts on the ground
—heavy smoke at the entrances

Support 2: Smokers take more breaks.

Details: —need frequent cigarette breaks
—not fair to others who must do extra work

Support 3: Smoking culture influences nonsmokers.

Details: —nonsmokers take breaks with their smoking friends
—some nonsmokers become smokers

ESSAY LINK

In a cause and effect essay, place the thesis statement in the introduction. Then use body paragraphs, each with its own topic sentence, to support the thesis statement.



Watch the **Video**

Paragraph: How to write a successful paragraph
[MyWritingLab](#)

The Writer's Desk Write a Paragraph Plan

Refer to the information you generated in previous Writer's Desk exercises, and create a paragraph plan. If you think of new details that will explain your point more effectively, include them here.

Topic sentence: _____

Support 1: _____


Details: _____

Support 2: _____

Details: _____

Support 3: _____

Details: _____

 **Watch the Video**
Paragraphs: Drafting a
Paragraph
MyWritingLab

The First Draft

After you outline your ideas in a plan, you are ready to write the first draft. Remember to write complete sentences. You might include transitional expressions to help your ideas flow smoothly.

 **Watch the Video**
Revising the Paragraph:
Development
MyWritingLab

Transitional Expressions


The following transitional expressions are useful for showing causes and effects.

| To Show Causes | To Show Effects |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| for this reason | accordingly |
| the first cause | as a result |
| the most important cause | consequently |

The Writer's Desk Write the First Draft

Write the first draft of your cause and effect paragraph. Before you write, carefully review your paragraph plan, and make any necessary changes.

REVISING AND EDITING

 **Watch the Video**
Revising and Editing Your
Own Paragraphs
MyWritingLab

Revise and Edit a Cause and Effect Paragraph

When you finish writing a cause and effect paragraph, review your work and revise it to make the examples as clear as possible to your readers. Make sure that your sentences relate to the topic sentence and flow together smoothly.

PRACTICE 3

Read the next student paragraph, and answer the questions.

Smoke-free work zones, implemented for obvious reasons, have had surprising consequences for employees. First, smokers light up outside the main entrances of buildings, and nonsmokers must pass through a cloud of heavy smoke to get inside. Additionally, the ground outside entrances is littered with cigarette butts, which smokers do not consider as pollution. Moreover, smokers get more breaks because they frequently leave their workstations to have cigarettes. Some people smoke cigars, and others smoke pipes. The nonsmokers must work more harder to cover for their smoking colleagues, and this makes the nonsmokers resentful. An other surprising consequence is that the smoking culture influences nonsmokers. Former smokers, or those who have never smoked, sometimes get into the habit of smoking in order to socialize with their colleagues during the many breaks. Although nosmoking rules are in the public interest, the consequences of such rules should be examined more thoroughly.

Revising

1. Does the paragraph focus on causes, effects, or both? _____
2. List the causes or effects given. _____


3. There is one sentence in the paragraph that does not relate to the topic sentence. Cross out that sentence.


Editing


4. There is one error with the comparative form. An adverb is incorrectly formed. Correct the error directly on the text.
5. This paragraph contains three misspelled words. Identify and correct them.


GRAMMAR LINK

See the following chapters for more information about these grammar topics:
 Adjectives and Adverbs, Chapter 29
 Spelling, Chapter 32

 **Watch the Video**
 Adjectives
[MyWritingLab](#)

 **Watch the Video**
 Adverbs
[MyWritingLab](#)

 **Watch the Video**
 Spelling
[MyWritingLab](#)

 **Watch the Video**
 Paragraphs: Revising the Paragraph—A Checklist
[MyWritingLab](#)

The Writer's Desk **Revise and Edit Your Paragraph**

Revise and edit the paragraph that you wrote for the previous Writer's Desk. Ensure that your paragraph has unity, adequate support, and coherence. Also, correct any errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics.

REFLECT ON IT

Think about what you have learned in this chapter. If you do not know an answer, review that topic.

1. What is the difference between the words *affect* and *effect*?
 Affect: _____
 Effect: _____
2. Brainstorm three possible causes for each option.
 a. Starting to smoke _____

 b. A car crash _____

3. Brainstorm three possible effects for each option.
 a. Pollution: _____

 b. War: _____

The Writer's Room

Writing Activity 1: Topic

Choose any of the following topics, or choose your own topic. Then write a cause and effect paragraph.

WRITING LINK

More Cause and Effect Writing Topics

- Chapter 19, Writer's Room topic 2 (page 312)
- Chapter 26, Writer's Room topic 3 (page 389)
- Chapter 35, Writer's Room topic 2 (page 512)

READING LINK

More Cause and Effect Readings

- "We Turned Some Sharp Corners: A Marriage Proposal in Durango" by Nick Massey-Garrison (page 530)
- "A Shift in Perception" by Cynthia Macdonald (page 551)
- "What Adolescents Miss When We Let Them Grow Up in Cyberspace" by Brent Staples (page 581)
- "Is Anything Private Anymore?" by Sean Flynn (page 584)

General Topics

Causes and/or effects of ...

1. Having a close friendship
2. Having a caffeine addiction
3. Getting a higher education
4. Having a poor body image
5. Spoiling a child
6. Displaying voter apathy

College- and Work-Related Topics

Causes and/or effects of ...

7. Having low (or high) marks in college
8. Not keeping up with college workload
9. Skipping classes
10. Working with a family member
11. Working at home
12. Getting a promotion

Writing Activity 2: Photo Writing

How has the technological world helped or hindered personal relationships?



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times/rEDUX

Writing Activity 3: Media Writing

Watch a television show or movie that deals with falling in love or breaking up. You could watch any television soap opera or a romance movie such as *Passchendaele*, *The Proposal*, *Love Happens*, *Take This Waltz*, or *17 Again*. You could also listen to love songs. Describe the causes or effects of falling in love or breaking up, and use examples to support your point.



Photos 12 / Alamy



CAUSE AND EFFECT PARAGRAPH CHECKLIST

As you write your cause and effect paragraph, review the checklist on the inside front cover. Also, ask yourself the following questions.

- Does my topic sentence indicate clearly that my paragraph focuses on causes, effects, or both?
- Do I have adequate supporting examples of causes and/or effects?
- Do I make logical and valid points?
- Do I use the terms *effect* and/or *affect* correctly?

How Do I Get a Better Grade?

Visit [MyWritingLab](#) for audiovisual lectures and additional practice sets about cause and effect writing.