

The cause and effect essay is an exploration of the *reasons for* or *results of* things or events. This type of essay can include both causes and effects, but generally contains only one of the two.

Before Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

1. **Choose your topic.** Make sure that the topic is not too large or too small. For example, a 500-word essay on the causes of World War II will surely not be able to cover all relevant information.
2. **Decide whether you want to discuss causes or effects.** Often a topic will be better suited to one or the other.
3. **Create an outline.** This will help improve organization and coherence in your essay.

Tips for writing Cause & Effect Essays

1. Make sure your **thesis statement** indicates whether the essay will discuss causes or effects (or both).

Examples of thesis statements

- a) The chief causes of dissatisfaction among the workers in the office where I spent my placement are low wages, sexual harassment and boredom.
- b) The beneficial effects of my annual canoe trip include reduced stress, increased fitness, and improved family relationships.

2. What is the **order** of the causes/effects you are writing about? (i.e. the least important to the most important, or vice versa.)
3. **Avoid faulty logic.** Make sure that there is an actual link between the causes and effects being presented. (i.e. ask yourself if you have assumed a cause/effect relationship where there is none.)
4. Fully **support all your statements.** Back up main points with clear examples and facts (statistics or quotations may also be used).
5. Conclude by **re-emphasizing** the importance of your main point.

When moving between causes and effects in your essay, the following **transitional** words/phrases may be used.

Transitions for Cause & Effect Essays

Transitions for Causes:

is a result of, results from, the reason for, since, because (of), due to, leads to, is caused by

Transitions for Effects:

so, so that, so then, a consequence of, consequently, therefore, thus, then, for this reason, as a result

You also may want to use words to indicate the certainty of your statements. Be sure not to over- or understate the strength of your arguments. You also want to use words to indicate the level of importance of your points.

Signal Words for Cause & Effect Essays

Degrees of Certainty:

certainly, may, necessarily, perhaps, probably, undoubtedly, unquestionably

Levels of Importance:

above all, equally important, finally, first, initially, last, primarily, second, third

Consider the topic “Air Pollution in Mexico” as an example

What are the **causes** of air pollution in Mexico? Students in the past have suggested these causes:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) exhaust from automobiles and trucks | (5) corruption at emission stations |
| (2) smoke from industry’s smokestacks | (6) more high pollution as a result of no-drive days |
| (3) geography | (7) insufficient public transportation |
| (4) speed bumps | |

Any of these ideas about the causes of air pollution may be developed into a two- or three-page essay. It would be possible to write about just one cause - the main cause - and explore it in depth. Or, it would be possible to write about the three main causes.

On the other hand, what are the **effects** of air pollution in Mexico? Students in the past have given these effects:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| (1) poor visibility | (4) allergies |
|---------------------|---------------|

5. What effect has the automobile had on North American society?
6. What is the value of having a pet or a hobby?
7. What are the effects of beauty? Ugliness? Poverty? Wealth?
8. What are the effects of working while attending school?

Sample Cause & Effect Essay- Causes of Car Accidents

For many people, driving a vehicle is an everyday activity. People rely on their cars to get to work, school, and other important places. However, driving can be dangerous, and although weather conditions and car malfunctions can contribute to accidents, the behaviour of drivers is most often the cause of accidents. The three main causes of car accidents are poorly trained drivers, distracted drivers, and impaired drivers.

One cause of car accidents is poorly trained drivers. Drivers who don't follow the rules of the road can be putting themselves and others at risk. For example, drivers who exceed the speed limit will have a more difficult time stopping or turning if something, such as an animal, crosses their path. In addition, there are road signs that drivers need to recognize, understand, and obey. Other drivers cannot tell how people who do not obey road signs will drive, and this unpredictability can lead to accidents. Finally, not checking blind spots and not being aware of one's surroundings can result in a collision. A driver who is not aware of what is around his or

her vehicle may crash into other cars or objects, not realizing they are there. For these reasons, poorly trained drivers can cause accidents.

Distracted drivers are another cause of car accidents. Driving is a task that requires the driver's full attention, so performing other tasks while driving can lead to an accident. For example, people who talk on their cell phone while driving are limiting their abilities, since talking on a cell phone often requires the use of one hand and takes some concentration. Cell phones are not the only distraction; drivers will often work on laptops, put on makeup, and do other activities. If a driver is doing these things, he or she is not focused on the road. The driver then may, for example, not notice if a car has

stopped in front of him or her and collide with that car. Drivers should wait until they have reached their destination to perform other tasks, as such activities often lead to accidents.

A final cause of car accidents is impaired drivers. Drinking and driving is something that is obviously dangerous. A driver's ability to drive a car is seriously lessened when he or she is

under the influence of alcohol, and many accidents have been caused by people who were drunk driving. Driving while under the influence of drugs is also dangerous. Often illegal drugs impair a driver as much as alcohol. For example, drugs such as LSD can cause visual hallucinations, and drivers may swerve recklessly to avoid yellow dancing rabbits. Even legal drugs, like

medications, should be used with caution if the user is going to be driving. Some of these drugs can make the user drowsy, and this state will slow the driver's reaction time to things happening. All of these influences can certainly lead to car accidents.

Driving is difficult, and drivers have a responsibility to drive with great care and attention. An inability to do so can result in a car accident. Accidents are caused by many things; however, three of the most significant causes are poorly trained drivers, distracted drivers, and impaired drivers. As long as these types of drivers remain on the road, accidents will happen.