

Cause and Effect Essay

Definition:

In this kind of essay, the aim is to explain the causes (reasons) or the effects (results) of an event or situation.

e.g. Causes of air pollution (multiple factors leading to air pollution).

e.g. Effects of watching too much TV (many effects of a situation).

Sometimes an event causes something to happen, and that situation leads to another event, and it causes another event to happen. This is called the causal chain or *domino* effect.

e.g. Use of deodorants will bring the end of the world.

There may be several causes or effects of a situation. However, in a student essay, it is advisable to keep the number of major points to 2 or 3, which form separate developmental paragraphs.

Organization:

Depending on the topic, there may be three patterns of organization:

1. Multiple causes-->effect

In this pattern, the organization is as follows:

thesis statement: Air pollution is caused by the following factors: exhaust gases from cars, uncontrolled factory releases, and burning of low-quality coal for heating.

I. exhaust gases from cars

A. government does not have enough control

B. citizens are not conscientious

II. uncontrolled factory gases

A. no regular checks on gases released

B. factories are inside the borders of residential areas

III. burning of low-quality coal for heating

A. no governmental control

B. other forms of energy too expensive

Each developmental paragraph is devoted to one of the causes of air pollution. Each cause is supported by two minor supports. While writing, these major and minor ideas should be adequately explained and exemplified as well.

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2. Cause-->Multiple effects

In this pattern, the effects of a certain situation are explained in separate paragraphs, with the following organization:

thesis statement: Watching too much TV is one of the major sociological issues of this century, which has many effects on the physiology and psychology of people.

I. eating disorders

A. TV meals

B. obesity

II. communication problems

A. more violence

B. no interpersonal talk

Again, we have grouped related effects under two main points: physiological and psychological. Then, we have supported each effect with two minor supports (A and B). While writing, we should explain these major and minor supports by giving examples and/or defining what we mean, as well.

3. Causal chain / Domino

In this pattern, the events lead to one another, as in the following organization:

thesis statement: Using deodorants with chlorofluorocarbon gas will bring the end of world.

I. Chlorofluorocarbon gases are contained in most deodorants and released by some factories into the air.

II. This gas causes the ozone layer to become thinner and finally disappear in patches.

III. The unfiltered ultraviolet rays of the sun cause overheating in the poles of the earth, where the icebergs start to melt.

IV. The huge amount of water released from the poles leads to a rise in the sea-level.

V. The sea will cover the land and this will be the end of the world.

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Again, each major point should be supported with examples, statistics that show that there are some factories and deodorants that release chlorofluorocarbons, that there is a rise in the sea-level, etc.

Language:

To explain reasons and results, we use:

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, ...

Do not forget that using transitions enables the piece of writing to be coherent; it is easier for the reader to follow our ideas when transitions are used to link them together. However, overuse of transitions causes a traffic jam and should be avoided. We should be using transitions sparingly (only when necessary).

Sample cause and effect essay

EFFECTS OF WATCHING TOO MUCH TV

Discoveries and invention of devices are always welcome till we, humans, find a way to abuse its benefits and be adversely affected by it. This was the case when Wilhelm Roentgen discovered x-ray and within five years, the British Army was using a mobile x-ray unit to locate bullets and shrapnel in wounded soldiers in the Sudan. TV was also invented with positive thoughts in mind – there would be no national borders, education and communication would be worldwide, etc. However, we are now trying to overcome its physiological and psychological adverse effects on human beings.

One of the physiological effects of watching TV in excessive amounts is eye-strain. It is true that there are specifications for watching TV; TV should be 5 m. away from the eye, the room should be adequately lit, TV should be placed at the same height with our eyes, etc. However, these do not prevent our eyes from getting tired if we keep watching

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TV for a long time. Another effect is obesity, which is widely observed in people who like watching TV and eating snacks everyday (there is even a term "TV snacks" to refer to fast food that is suitable for eating in front of the TV). TV is such a powerful machine that people cannot get away from it – it is addictive.

Apart from the physiological effects, TV also causes psychological effects. One is a result of being exposed to violence. After seeing so many violent scenes on TV, people start considering violent actions normal and they lose their sensitivity to their environment. Partly connected to this effect, the interpersonal communication among people decreases. Being insensitive to the suffering of other people causes people to become alienated. Also, after coming home from work people seek to relax in front of the TV, and generally people prefer watching TV to talking to each other. This issue is very important since lack of interpersonal relationships mostly end with divorces.

Shortly, inventions are meant to be beneficial for human beings, if we know how to benefit from them. TV is one of such inventions that need to be used for the right purpose only – being educated and entertained for a reasonable (according to age) period of time. We may, then, be safe from or at least reduce the adverse physiological and psychological effects of watching too much TV.
