

6. Cause and Effect

NOTE: The following is general information about the rhetorical mode. It is not meant to take the place of any specific instructions given by your instructor for this assignment. If your instructor wants you to write your paper in a different manner, then by all means do it the way your instructor requires you to do it.

Examining Causes and Effects

Cause. You are to write an essay in which you discuss the cause or causes of a problem or a situation. Here are some particulars:

1. What is a “cause”?
 - The word “cause” means the reason why something exists. For example, what causes unemployment? What are the causes of child abuse? Why is the divorce rate in this country 50%?
2. The cause of something requires REASONS.
 - You should come up with at least three reasons as to WHY your problem or situation exists.
 - You may list as many reasons as you can think of, but you must have a minimum of three.
3. How should these reasons be arranged?
 - Arrange them in increasing order of importance. In other words, begin with the “so-so” reason and end with the best or most important reason. So the arrangement looks like this:

First reason:	Average
Second reason:	Better
Third reason:	The best!

4. Devote one entire paragraph to explaining each reason.
 - You should find enough to say about each of your reasons that you can write a whole paragraph just about that one reason alone.
5. Other important information:
 - Select a problem or situation that you really care about and are interested in.
 - Be sure to analyze that problem or situation in order to come up with good reasons why it exists.

Effect. The other version of this assignment is to take a situation or a problem and explain what you feel is the effect of it.

1. What is “effect”?

- The word *effect* means a RESULT, an OUTCOME, a CONSEQUENCE. It answers the question, “What would happen if?”

For example: What would happen if Carbondale imposed a curfew on its teenage residents?

2. The other “rules” are the same as those for a cause paper.

- Analyze the situation carefully to come up with the effects of it.
- Have at least three effects.
- Arrange the effects in increasing order of importance.
- Devote one whole paragraph to discussing each effect.
- Select a topic that you are a lot about.

The problem or situation you select could be a world-wide problem, a national problem, a local situation, or even something pertaining to your own individual life. Whatever it is, you should have a deep interest in the topic and perhaps even personal experience.

Remember to write just one essay -- either about the cause of a problem OR about the effect of a problem.

Here are just a few sample ideas:

- Why is the crime rate so high?
- Why do college students discontinue going to college?
- Why do so many traffic accidents occur over three-day holidays?

What would happen if...

- all drugs were legalized?
- smoking in all public places was outlawed?
- all courses at Logan became pass/fail (no letter grades)?