

Week 11: The cause OR effect essay

Cause OR Effect Essay

To begin with, note that in most academic writing, it's enough of a problem to discuss causes OR effects; it's asking too much in too short a space to ask both. So your first decision this week is to decide which essay you want to write: an essay in which you discuss what caused something, or an essay in which you discuss the effects of something.

Both of these are problematic.

With regards to causes, they are terribly difficult to nail down. We go throughout life THINKING we know the causes of things, but probably 9 times out of 10 we're wrong and don't even realize it. And that's the problem: we ASSUME we know, when in fact we are only guessing.

For example, what causes childhood obesity?

I'll bet that as soon as you read that question, you started running through all the things you KNOW cause this:

- Fast food
- Junk food
- Processed food
- No recess at school
- Video games
- School lunches
- Hormones injected into meat and milk animals

But, unless you have done detailed research on this topic, you are only guessing. And don't assume that because one thing happens before another, it must have caused it. Check out this video clip:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL_vHDjG5Wk

We often get causes wrong when we fall into that logical trap. So if you choose to write a cause essay, make sure you have done the research to confidently show me the REAL causes, not the assumed causes.

On the effects side, we have the same challenges, from the other side. Just as we can't assume that if one thing happens before another, it must have caused the other, we also can't assume

that if one thing follows another, it must have been caused by the other. Let me give you an example:

- **Fact: In the summer, people get fewer colds.**
- **Fact: In the summer, people eat more popsicles.**
- **Fact: In the winter, people get more colds**
- **Fact: In the winter, people eat fewer popsicles.**
- **Conclusion: Popsicles help fight the common cold.**

All of those facts are true. Can you see how they could lead to that conclusion? The only reason we don't fall for the argument is that we know better. But what if we didn't? That's why we must do the research and be confident that we have objectively verified causes or effects before we write based on assumptions.

Chapter 12, your reading this week, will discuss this essay in more detail, along with providing several other important tools:

As with our other essays, we will write this essay over the span of two weeks. This week your job is to read the chapter, select a topic, write a rough draft, and post that draft to the Causes OR Effects Rough Draft Submission Forum, as well as participate in our normal classroom discussion.

Next week your job will be to provide peer reviews for your classmates' essays as well as prepare your own final draft.

READING

Chapter 12 in *The Super Compact Guide*

THE CAUSES OR EFFECTS DISCUSSION FORUM

Once you've completed the reading, go to the Causes OR Effects Discussion Forum link. Review my opening question and respond, and then respond to at least TWO of your classmates throughout the week.

THE CAUSES OR EFFECTS ESSAY ROUGH DRAFT SUBMISSION FORUM

By midnight Sunday night, post the rough draft of your Causes OR Effects Essay to the Causes OR Effects Rough Draft Submission Forum. Next week you will return to this forum to download at least THREE of your classmates' drafts to review. You will post those peer reviews in the Week 12 Causes OR Effects Essay Peer Review Forum, which will be available next week.

THE CAUSES OR EFFECTS ESSAY

As with our other essays this term, I want this essay to reflect your technical education or work experience. That being the case, select a topic either related to your work (if you already work in our chosen career field), or select a topic from your studies. Note that "process" is a common term in technical education, and it is clearly related to causes. Feel free to use that in your essay. For example, if you have seen a faulty process at work that results in poor outcomes, consider writing out how the EFFECTS of that faulty process, and how it could be fixed.