

JC Learning Lab

The Cause – Effect Paper

The cause paper

Think of a cause as an event or condition that ***brings about*** a certain result. Such questions as "What caused your accident?", "Why are some high school graduates unable to read?", "Why does living with roommates make going to college difficult?" and "Why are some students disinterested in their studies?" involve thinking about the causes of certain events or situations. *In writing a cause paper, you explain the relationship between a certain condition and three of its causes explaining how and/or why the condition occurred/exists.*

The effect paper

Think of an effect as the ***direct result or consequence*** of some prior event or occurrence. Such questions as "How has attending college changed your work habits?" "How has having a child changed your relationship with your spouse?" "What are some effects of county tax hikes?" involve thinking about the result/results of some action. *In writing an effect paper, you explain three results/effects of a certain condition or accomplished fact.*

Like most of the other Comp I essays, the cause/effect paper consists of five paragraphs. The introductory paragraph offers some general comments related to your paper's subject and ends with the thesis statement. Be sure that your thesis statement is reasonable and makes supportable claims. Avoid making your claims absolute ("Smoking tobacco always causes lung cancer"). Instead, use some qualifying expressions like "in some cases", "may be", "one of the reasons", "sometimes" and so forth. Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence stating a cause or effect. (*Remember: In the cause paper, you explain three causes. In the effect paper, you explain three effects.*) The rest of the paragraph provides examples explaining the cause or effect. In the concluding paragraph, you may reword the thesis statement and restate your paper's main points.

Sample essay:

A Serious Car Accident

Almost every day one can scan The Mississippi Press and read about a car accident that has occurred in our area. I never dreamed that I would be the subject of such an article. However, last October 16, I was involved in a very serious wreck caused by three factors: my carelessness, the condition of the road, and the size of the cars involved.

One of the biggest factors that brought about the accident was my carelessness. Running late for my 8:00 class at the local college, I was drinking a cup of coffee while driving way over the speed limit. The light was green as I approached the intersection from some distance, but unfortunately it had turned red by the time I looked up from sipping my coffee. As a result, I was not able to stop in time.

Another factor that helped cause the accident was the condition of the road. Gautier had been experiencing one of its weekly deluges of rain for almost four hours, so the roads were extremely slippery. As soon as I realized that the light was red, I applied the brakes, but this helped very little. I slid into the intersection, stopping only when I hit another car.

In addition, the size of the cars contributed greatly to the seriousness of the accident. I was driving a small Saturn, and the other driver was in a Ford Explorer. Because my car was so small and light compared to the S.U.V., my car suffered considerable damage. Also, I had several injuries, including a broken leg, a fractured arm, and multiple facial cuts. The other driver suffered no injuries, and his Ford had only minor damage.

In conclusion, October 16 is a day that I will never forget. However, my serious automobile accident did teach me several important lessons: I now drive more carefully, I own a larger car, and I never "drink while driving."

