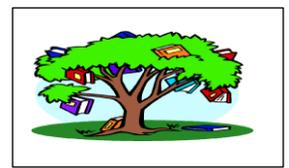


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



The Cause and Effect Essay

This type of essay looks either at the **causes** leading up to a particular situation or event or at the **effects** of that situation or event. Great care must be taken to ensure that logical connections are made, especially since causes may be inferred and effects may only be predicted to occur in the future. Events occurring in sequence do not necessarily have a causal relationship.

Purpose: to inform readers about a causal relationship and possibly persuade them to act

Perspective: third-person (*he, she, it, one, they...*)

Organization: chronological, in order of importance (probably least to most)

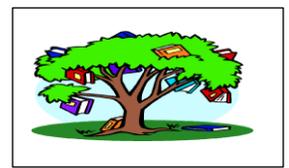
Typical Structure:

1. **Introduction:**
 - a. Attention-getter focusing the reader on a particular issue
 - b. Necessary background information
 - c. Description of focal situation or event
 - d. **Thesis:** statement linking the focus to its causes or effects
2. **Body (each paragraph):**
 - a. **Topic sentence:** one cause or effect linked to the central focus
 - b. Supporting details proving this link
 - c. Significance of this link
 - d. Transition to the next cause or effect
3. **Conclusion:**
 - a. Concise summary of the main point emphasized
 - b. Overall significance of this analysis
 - c. Prediction or advice for readers

Notes:

- This type of essay is usually **persuasive**, since causes and effects are often not fully known.
- Strengthen your argument with supporting evidence. Define terms, offer facts and statistics, and provide plenty of examples.
- Unless there is clear evidence that one event directly causes another, qualify your statements with phrases such as "It appears..." or "It seems likely..." or "Available evidence suggests..."
- Use transition words such as *because, since, consequently, and therefore* to link causes and effects.
- It is possible to discuss both the causes of some event and its effects in a single essay, but you must be careful not to confuse the reader.

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Sample Essay

Getting people to participate in campus services is, for some, like pulling teeth. Community colleges, being commuter campuses, are filled with people leading busy lives. People work, have families, and are engaged in technology that leaves little time or attention for campus offerings. What can help folks to attend the good things a college can offer, and what would be the effect of this marketing? The answer lies in community.

Effective marketing is the catalyst for sales. Sales are driven by word of mouth at best, and a good atmosphere of community and personal interaction are the best things to get the word out. When people talk and share what is going on, there is not only information being given, but motivation as well. It appears that the stronger the community feel, the more involvement, and the more involvement, the stronger the community. It is a cause that is hard to start.

What things can a community college do to provide an atmosphere of involvement? To be sure, we post things in visible areas, put images on websites, and do mechanics in other contexts. Yet, the motive key is not being turned. Why? People may be given information, but without excitement and enthusiasm to participate, there is no motive. Simply making an intentional effort to rise up from our computer screens, leave the office, walk around with our heads up, and know names can be a start.

If we had this intentionality, what could happen? Community. With kindness and respect in our relationships, just like responsibility and honesty in our work, we would promote a safe environment to enjoy the good things of college life. The impersonal isolation of the techno world is not unavoidable when we realize that comraderie is not unattainable. Jesus says to use worldly wealth to obtain friends, because our resources should serve us, not vice versa.

A college is a grand place. Things are always happening, but it takes personal connections to make them fun and meaningful. It is interesting how cause and effect in this case grow on one another. Perhaps it is because people are involved.