

## Cause/Effect pattern

### Identifying Causes and Effects

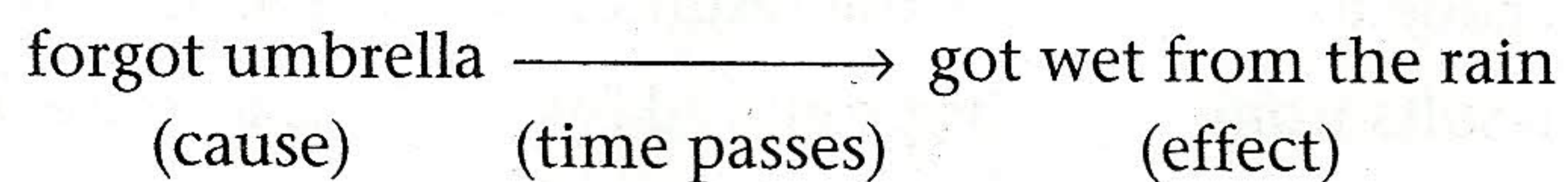
Causes and effects are part of our daily lives. Therefore, this pattern is used often by writers of history books, science texts, and novels. It is important to recognize the cause/effect pattern when you read, but it is sometimes more complicated than some of the other patterns.

**Example:** What happened first? Next?

Steve forgot his umbrella this morning.

Steve got very wet from the rain.

Steve forgot his umbrella first. Then he got wet from the rain. This is shown in the following diagram:



However, a cause/effect sentence is not always written with the cause first!

- a. Because Steve forgot his umbrella, he got wet from the rain.  
(cause)                                      (effect)
- b. Steve got wet from the rain because he forgot his umbrella.  
(effect)                                      (cause)

In both sentences, *because* is the signal word. It stays with the part of the sentence that tells the cause, even if the cause comes after the effect in the sentence. In order to understand a cause/effect pattern, always ask, "What happened first?" Then you will know the cause.



## EXERCISE 11

**A. Study the following pairs of words and phrases. In each pair, which comes first in time? Which causes which? Working with another student, draw an arrow from the cause to the effect in each pair.**

**Example:**

viruses —————→ infectious diseases

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. AIDS                    | HIV                          |
| 2. epidemics               | bacteria                     |
| 3. coughs                  | colds and flu                |
| 4. improperly stored food  | food poisoning               |
| 5. slow infant development | poor nutrition               |
| 6. skin cancer             | too much exposure to the sun |
| 7. swimming in pools       | ear infection                |
| 8. heart trouble           | diet high in fat             |
| 9. lung cancer             | cigarette smoking            |
| 10. skiing                 | broken leg                   |

**B. For each pair above, write a sentence. Use a cause/effect signal word based on the directions below. Begin each sentence with the word or phrase in the left-hand column.**

- If the arrow goes from left to right (→), use the following cause/effect signal words. These words are used in sentences where the cause comes first.

cause(s)	lead(s) to	is the cause of	results in
creates	produces	gives rise to	brings about
makes	provokes	contributes to	

- If the arrow goes from right to left (←), use the following cause/effect signal words. These words are used in sentences where the effect comes first.

is due to	is the result of	come(s) from
results from	is produced by	is a consequence of
follows	is caused by	

When a certain effect sometimes happens, but not always, use *can* with the signal word, as in the example below.

**Example:** Viruses can cause infectious diseases.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple causes and effects

In many real-life situations, there is not just a single cause and a single effect.

**Example a:** Sometimes a single cause can produce many effects. Read the following paragraph to find the cause and its effects.

In 1992, Hurricane Iniki hit the Hawaiian Island of Kauai. As a result, all telephone lines were out of order, the airport was closed, and thousands of homes were damaged. Hotels were washed away, and tourists' holidays were ruined. Many Kauaians lost their jobs.

What is the cause? *Hurricane Iniki*

What are the effects? *telephones out of order, airport closed, homes damaged, hotels washed away, holidays ruined, jobs lost*

**Example b:** Sometimes a single effect is the result of several causes. Read the following paragraph to find the effect and its causes.

The Frozen Yogurt Company closed its shop in the center of town. There really was no other choice. The poor economy meant fewer customers and higher prices for supplies. Bills for electricity and water seemed to go up every month. And then the landlord decided to double the rent.

What is the effect? *The Frozen Yogurt Company closed*

What are the causes? *poor economy; fewer customers; higher prices for supplies; higher electric, water, and rent bills.*

**Example c:** Sometimes a single cause leads to an effect that becomes the cause of another effect and so forth. This could be called a "chain of events," with all the causes and effects linked together. Notice how one thing leads to another in this paragraph.

During the war in Vietnam in the 1970s, many villages were destroyed. People were left homeless, so they moved to the city. The cities were often overcrowded, with little hope for a good life. This led many Vietnamese to leave their homeland and move to the United States. As a result, many schools and colleges in the United States expanded their English language programs.

Chain of events:

*War in Vietnam → Villages were destroyed → People were homeless → People moved to cities → Cities became crowded, no hope → Vietnamese moved to the United States → United States needed more English language programs*



## EXERCISE 12

**A. Here are two causes that have multiple possible effects. Working with another student, write the letters of the effects that could go with each cause. Some of the effects can be used twice, and there are many possible answers. Be prepared to explain your answers.**

**Causes:**

Cause 1: *Learning a new language*

Possible effects: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cause 2: *Living in a new city*

Possible effects: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible effects:**

- a. Having many headaches
- b. Meeting interesting people
- c. Feeling in danger
- d. Spending a lot of money
- e. Going to the language lab
- f. Feeling confused
- g. Understanding others' ideas
- h. Doing homework
- i. Finding a new job
- j. Getting married

**B. Here are two effects that have multiple possible causes. Working with another student, write the letters of the causes that could go with each effect. There are many possible answers. Be prepared to explain your answers.**

**Effects:**

Effect 1: *Many animals have become extinct.*

Possible causes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Effect 2: *Many cities are overcrowded.*

Possible causes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible causes:**

- a. Smaller rain forests
- b. Use of chemical fertilizers
- c. Carbon dioxide emissions
- d. Lack of job opportunities on farms
- e. Polluted rivers
- f. Wars
- g. High birth rates
- h. Too many hunters



## **Problem/Solution pattern**

Every day, people face a variety of problems, small and large.

*Who will take care of our plants while we are out of town?*

*How can we stop our neighbors from being noisy late at night?*

*How can we pay the rent and also pay our doctor bills?*

*Can governments find a place to store harmful radioactive waste from nuclear power plants?*

The problem/solution pattern is important because it is found in almost every kind of text: in science, history, and social science textbooks, and in novels, newspapers, and magazines. In the problem/solution pattern, the topic sentence usually states a problem to be solved. Often, this is followed by a description of the problem. Then there is either a suggestion for how to solve the problem or a description of how someone solved it.

## **Signal words and the problem/solution pattern**

Unlike the previous four patterns of organization, the writer may use many different kinds of signal words in a problem/solution passage. For this reason, this pattern can be more difficult to recognize than other patterns. One way to recognize a problem/solution pattern is to look for the word *problem* or one of its synonyms in the topic sentence. These synonyms include: *situation, difficulty, trouble, crisis, dilemma, predicament, issue, and quandary*. Another way to recognize the pattern is by noticing that the passage begins with a question that states a problem. In some cases, however, the only way to recognize the problem/solution pattern is by reading the whole paragraph or passage.



**Example:**

**In the following paragraph, the problem is underlined. What is the solution? Using a complete sentence, write the solution on the line below. Then complete the main idea statement.**

How can you keep fruits and vegetables fresh in a hot climate when you do not have a refrigerator? A teacher in Nigeria has invented a new, nonelectric cooler that does not need ice. It is a simple device made of a small clay pot that fits inside a larger pot, with wet sand between them and a damp cloth on top. This cooler can keep eggplants, tomatoes, and peppers fresh for three weeks or more. Since the device does not require electricity and it costs little to make, it could be extremely useful in developing countries, where transporting and storing fresh produce is difficult. The Nigerian teacher has won a \$75,000 prize for his work. He plans to make and distribute the coolers in Nigeria and other African countries.

Problem: How can you keep fruits and vegetables fresh in a hot climate when you do not have a refrigerator?

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea: You can keep fruits and vegetables fresh in a hot climate if you

## EXERCISE 16

**Read each paragraph. Then, on the lines below, write the problem, the solution, and the main idea. Remember to write complete sentences. Compare your work with that of another student.**

### Staying Healthy

1. As people get older, they usually begin to experience physical problems. They often begin to lose their eyesight, their hearing, and their memory, and they become less able to get around. Getting older is a fact of life, of course, and there is nothing you can do to stop the years from passing. However, some scientists at Tufts University in Boston have discovered that there may be a way to prevent some of the physical problems associated with aging. In experiments with rats whose age was the same as humans at sixty-five to seventy-five, the scientists fed the animals half a cup of blueberries every day. After eight weeks, the rats showed improved physical skills. They also showed improved short-term memory, as demonstrated by the fact that they could find their way through mazes more quickly. In fact, blueberries contain antioxidants, which slow the aging process. One leading scientist says he now eats blueberries every day.

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_



2. In the United States and many industrialized countries, asthma is a serious health problem for many children, especially in cities. When a person has an asthma attack, the bronchial tubes that bring air to the lungs become blocked and it becomes very difficult to breathe. Doctors have long believed that the ozone in automobile exhaust causes asthma in children. The summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, provided some evidence to support this theory, because city officials closed the downtown area to all automobile traffic for seventeen days. During those days, only half the usual number of children in the area were taken to doctors or hospitals because of asthma attacks. A recent scientific report confirms the evidence of Atlanta and says that many asthma attacks could be prevented by reducing pollution from automobiles. This could be possible if more people took buses or trains to work instead of using their cars.

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Two men from Munich faced an unexpected predicament last weekend. They were hiking in the Italian Alps when a heavy snowstorm began. It was snowing so hard and there was so much wind that it was impossible to see where they were going, and they lost their way. The men were not dressed for snowy weather, so they were in serious danger of freezing to death. Fortunately, one of the men remembered a story he had read as a child and he suggested that they make a kind of cave in the snow to protect themselves from the wind. They were near some rocks, so they decided to dig a cave in the deep snow near the rocks. They spent the night in their cave. During the night they even managed to build a small fire, and they jumped around to stay warm. In the morning, the snow had stopped and they were able to find their way down the mountain. The idea of digging a cave probably saved their lives.

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

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