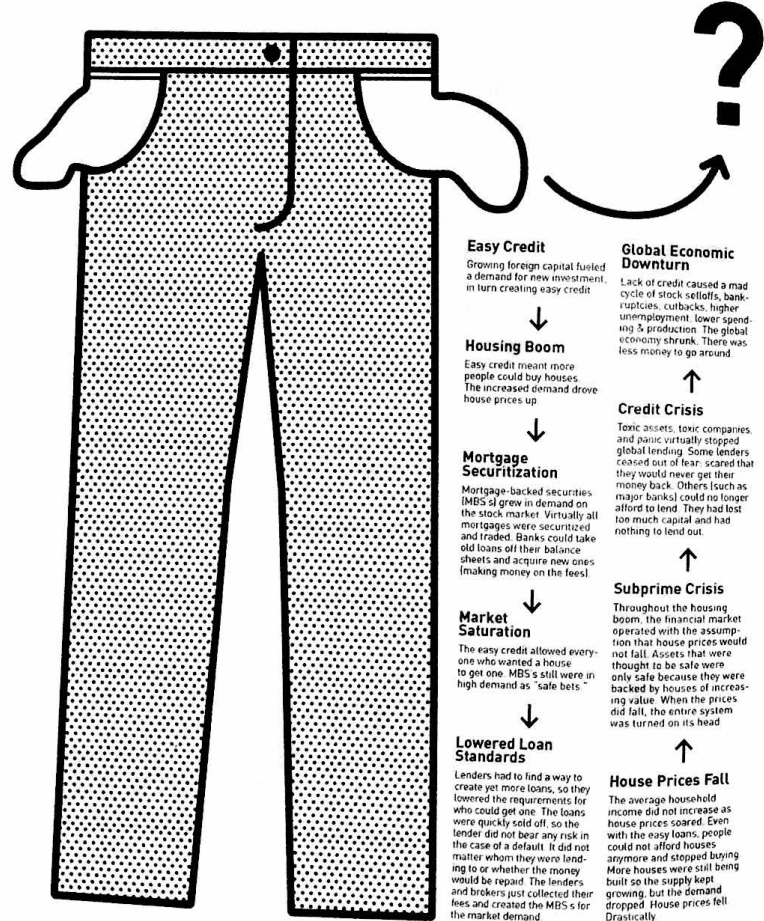


WHERE DID ALL THE MONEY GO



Easy Credit

Growing foreign capital fueled a demand for new investment, in turn creating easy credit.

Housing Boom

Easy credit meant more people could buy houses. The increased demand drove house prices up.

Mortgage Securitization

Mortgage-backed securities (MBS) grew in demand on the stock market. Virtually all mortgages were securitized and traded. Banks could take old loans off their balance sheets and acquire new ones (making money on the fees).

Market Saturation

The easy credit allowed everyone who wanted a house to get one. MBS's still were in high demand as "safe bets."

Lowered Loan Standards

Lenders had to find a way to create yet more loans, so they lowered the requirements for who could get one. The loans were quickly sold off, so the lender did not bear any risk in the case of a default. It did not matter whom they were lending to or whether the money would be repaid. The lenders and brokers just collected their fees and created the MBS's for the market demand.

Global Economic Downturn

Lack of credit caused a mad cycle of stock selloffs, bankruptcies, cutbacks, higher unemployment, lower spending & production. The global economy shrank. There was less money to go around.

Credit Crisis

Toxic assets, toxic companies, and panic virtually stopped global lending. Some lenders ceased out of fear; scared that they would never get their money back. Others (such as major banks) could no longer afford to lend. They had lost too much capital and had nothing to lend out.

Subprime Crisis

Throughout the housing boom, the financial market operated with the assumption that house prices would not fall. Assets that were thought to be safe were only safe because they were backed by houses of increasing value. When the prices did fall, the entire system was turned on its head.

House Prices Fall

The average household income did not increase as house prices soared. Even with the easy loans, people could not afford houses anymore and stopped buying. More houses were still being built so the supply kept growing, but the demand dropped. House prices fell drastically.

Cause and Effect Analysis

WHAT IS CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS?

PEOPLE EXHIBIT THEIR NATURAL CURIOSITY ABOUT THE WORLD BY asking questions. These questions represent a fundamental human need to find out how things work. Whenever a question asks *why*, answering it will require discovering a *cause* or a series of causes for a particular *effect*; whenever a question asks *what if*, its answer will point out the effect or effects that can result from a particular cause. Cause and effect analysis, then, explores the relationship between events or circumstances and the outcomes that result from them.

The illustration opposite is an excerpt from an analysis that attempts to explain a persistent question people have about the United States' current economic woes: Where did all the money go? The complex causal chain that "turned our country's pockets inside out" is represented with a combination of text and graphics explaining that easy credit, the initial cause, led to a chain of events culminating in the global economic downturn, with its multitude of disastrous consequences that Americans and people around the world are still feeling in all aspects of their lives.

CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS IN WRITTEN TEXTS

You will have frequent opportunity to use cause and effect analysis in your college writing. For example, a history instructor might ask you to explain the causes of the Six-Day War between Israel and its neighbors. In a paper for an American literature course, you might try to determine why *Huckleberry Finn* has sparked so much controversy in a number of schools and communities. On an environmental studies exam, you might have to speculate about the long-term effects acid rain will have on the ecology of northeastern Canada and the United States. Demonstrating an understanding of cause and effect is crucial to the process of learning.

One common use of the strategy is for the writer to identify a particular causal agent or circumstance and then discuss the consequences or effects it has had or may have. In the following passage from *Telephone* by John Brooks, it is clear from the first sentence that the author is primarily concerned with the effects that the telephone has had or may have had on modern life.

First sentence establishes purpose in the form of a question

A series of effects with the telephone as cause

What has the telephone done to us, or for us, in the hundred years of its existence? A few effects suggest themselves at once. It has saved lives by getting rapid word of illness, injury, or famine from remote places. By joining with the elevator to make possible the multistory residence or office building, it has made possible—for better or worse—the modern city. By bringing about a quantum leap in the speed and ease with which information moves from place to place, it has greatly accelerated the rate of scientific and technological change and growth in industry. Beyond doubt it has crippled if not killed the ancient art of letter writing. It has made living alone possible for persons with normal social impulses; by so doing, it has played a role in one of the greatest social changes of this century, the breakup of the multigenerational household. It has made the waging of war chillingly more efficient than formerly. Perhaps (though not provably) it has prevented wars that might have arisen out of international misunderstanding caused by written communication. Or perhaps—again not provably—by magnifying and extending irrational personal conflicts based on voice contact, it has caused wars. Certainly it has extended the scope of human conflicts, since it impartially disseminates the useful knowledge of scientists and the babble of bores, the affection of the affectionate and the malice of the malicious.

The bulk of Brooks's paragraph is devoted to answering the very question he poses in his opening sentence: "What has the telephone done to us, or for us, in the hundred years of its existence?" Notice that even though many of the effects Brooks discusses are verifiable or probable, he is willing to admit that he is speculating about those effects that he cannot prove.

A second common use of the strategy is to reverse the forms by first examining the effect; the writer describes an important event or problem (effect) and then examines the possible reasons (causes) for it. For example, experts might trace the causes of poverty to any or all of the following: poor education, a nonprogressive tax system, declining commitment to social services, inflation, discrimination, or even the welfare system that is designed to help those most in need.

A third use of the strategy is for the writer to explore a complex causal chain. In this selection from his book *The Politics of Energy*, Barry Commoner

examines the series of malfunctions that led to the near disaster at the Three Mile Island nuclear facility in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

On March 28, 1979, at 3:53 a.m., a pump at the Harrisburg plant failed. Because the pump failed, the reactor's heat was not drawn off in the heat exchanger and the very hot water in the primary loop overheated. The pressure in the loop increased, opening a release valve that was supposed to counteract such an event. But the valve stuck open and the primary loop system lost so much water (which ended up as a highly radioactive pool, six feet deep, on the floor of the reactor building) that it was unable to carry off all the heat generated within the reactor core. Under these circumstances, the intense heat held within the reactor could, in theory, melt its fuel rods, and the resulting "meltdown" could then carry a hugely radioactive mass through the floor of the reactor. The reactor's emergency cooling system, which is designed to prevent this disaster, was then automatically activated, but when it was, apparently, turned off too soon, some of the fuel rods overheated. This produced a bubble of hydrogen gas at the top of the reactor. (The hydrogen is dissolved in the water in order to react with oxygen that is produced when the intense reactor radiation splits water molecules into their atomic constituents. When heated, the dissolved hydrogen bubbles out of the solution.) This bubble blocked the flow of cooling water so that despite the action of the emergency cooling system the reactor core was again in danger of melting down. Another danger was that the gas might contain enough oxygen to cause an explosion that could rupture the huge containers that surround the reactor and release a deadly cloud of radioactive material into the surrounding countryside. Working desperately, technicians were able to gradually reduce the size of the gas bubble using a special apparatus brought in from the atomic laboratory at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and the danger of a catastrophic release of radioactive materials subsided. But the sealed-off plant was now so radioactive that no one could enter it for many months—or, according to some observers, for years—without being exposed to a lethal dose of radiation.

Tracing a causal chain, as Commoner does here, is similar to narration. The writer must organize the events sequentially to show clearly how each event leads to the next.

In a causal chain, an initial cause brings about a particular effect, which in turn becomes the immediate cause of a further effect, and so on, bringing about a series of effects that also act as new causes. The so-called domino effect is a good illustration of the idea of a causal chain; the simple tipping over of a domino (initial cause) can result in the toppling of any number of dominoes down the line (series of effects). For example, before a salesperson approaches an important client about a big sale, she prepares extensively for the meeting (initial cause). Her preparation causes her to impress the client (effect A), which guarantees her the big sale (effect B), which in

turn results in her promotion to district sales manager (effect C). The sale she made is the most immediate and the most obvious cause of her promotion, but it is possible to trace the chain back to its more essential cause: her hard work preparing for the meeting.

While the ultimate purpose of cause and effect analysis may seem simple—to know or to understand why something happens—determining causes and effects is often a thought-provoking and complex strategy. One reason for this complexity is that some causes are less obvious than others. *Immediate causes* are readily apparent because they are closest in time to the effect; the immediate cause of a flood, for example, may be the collapse of a dam. However, *remote causes* may be just as important, even though they are not as apparent and are perhaps even hidden. The remote (and, in fact, primary) cause of the flood might have been an engineering error or the use of substandard building materials or the failure of personnel to relieve the pressure on the dam caused by unseasonably heavy rains. In many cases, it is necessary to look beyond the most immediate causes to discover the true underlying sources of an event.

A second reason for the complexity of this strategy is the difficulty of distinguishing between possible and actual causes, as well as between possible and actual effects. An upset stomach may be caused by spoiled food, but it may also be caused by overeating, by flu, by nervousness, by pregnancy, or by a combination of factors. Similarly, an increase in the cost of electricity may have multiple effects: higher profits for utility companies, fewer sales of electrical appliances, higher prices for other products that depend on electricity in their manufacture, even the development of alternative sources of energy. Making reasonable choices among the various possibilities requires thought and care.

USING CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS AS A WRITING STRATEGY

Writers may use cause and effect analysis for three essential purposes: to inform, to speculate, and to argue. Most commonly, they will want to inform—to help their readers understand some identifiable fact. A state wildlife biologist, for example, might wish to tell the public about the effects severe winter weather has had on the state's deer herds. Similarly, in a newsletter, a member of Congress might explain to his or her constituency the reasons changes are being made in the Social Security system.

Cause and effect analysis may also allow writers to speculate—to consider what might be or what might have been. To satisfy the board of trustees, for example, a university treasurer might discuss the impact an increase

in tuition will have on the school's budget. A columnist for *People* magazine might speculate about the reasons for a new singer's sudden popularity. Similarly, pollsters estimate the effects that various voter groups will have on future elections, and historians evaluate how the current presidency will continue to influence American government in the coming decades.

Finally, cause and effect analysis provides an excellent basis from which to argue a given position or point of view. An editorial writer, for example, could argue that bringing a professional basketball team into the area would have many positive effects on the local economy and on the community as a whole. Educators who think that video games are a cause of delinquency and poor school performance have argued in newspapers and professional journals against the widespread acceptance of such games.

USING CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

When writing essays in the academic disciplines, you will have many opportunities to use the strategy of cause and effect analysis to both organize and strengthen the presentation of your ideas. To determine whether or not cause and effect analysis is the right strategy for you in a particular paper, use the guidelines described in Chapter 2 (Determining a Strategy for Developing Your Essay, pages 32–33). Consider the following examples:

Native American History

1. **MAIN IDEA:** Treaties between Native American groups and the U.S. government had various negative effects on the Native Americans involved.
2. **QUESTION:** What have been some of the most harmful results for Native Americans of treaties between Native American groups and the U.S. government?
3. **STRATEGY:** Cause and Effect Analysis. The word *results* signals that this study needs to examine the harmful effects of the provisions of the treaties.
4. **SUPPORTING STRATEGY:** Illustration. Examples need to be given of both treaties and their consequences.

Nutrition

1. **MAIN IDEA:** A major factor to be considered when examining why people suffer from poor nutrition is poverty.
2. **QUESTION:** What is the relationship between poverty and nutrition?

- STRATEGY:** Cause and Effect Analysis. The word *relationship* signals a linkage between poverty and nutrition. The writer has to determine what is meant by poverty and poor nutrition in this country or in the countries examined.
- SUPPORTING STRATEGY:** Definition. Precise definitions will first be necessary in order for the writer to make valid judgments concerning the causal relationship in question.

Nursing

- MAIN IDEA:** Alzheimer's disease is the progressive loss of brain nerve cells, causing gradual loss of memory, concentration, understanding, and in some cases sanity.
- QUESTION:** What role does the overproduction of a protein that destroys nerve cells play in the development of Alzheimer's disease, and what causes the overproduction in the first place?
- STRATEGY:** Cause and Effect Analysis. The words *role*, *play*, and *causes* signal that the issue here is determining and explaining how Alzheimer's disease originates.
- SUPPORTING STRATEGY:** Process Analysis. Describing how Alzheimer's operates will be essential to making the reader understand its causes and effects.

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY USING CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS AS A WRITING STRATEGY

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Kevin Cunningham spent most of his life in Flemington, New Jersey. While enrolled in the mechanical engineering program at the University of Vermont, Cunningham shared an apartment near the Burlington waterfront with several other students. There he became interested in the effects that upscale real estate development—or gentrification—would have on his neighborhood. Such development is not unique to Burlington; it is happening in the older sections of cities across the country. After gathering information for his essay by talking with people who live in the neighborhood, Cunningham found it useful to discuss both the causes and the effects of gentrification in his well-unified essay.

Gentrification Kevin Cunningham

Epigraph sets
the theme

I went back to Ohio, and my city was gone. . . .
—Chrissie Hynde, of the Pretenders

Thesis

My city is in Vermont, not Ohio, but soon my city might be gone, too. Or maybe it's I who will be gone. My street, Lakeview Terrace, lies unobtrusively in the old northwest part of Burlington and is notable, as its name suggests, for spectacular views of Lake Champlain framed by the Adirondacks. It's not that the neighborhood is going to seed, though—quite the contrary. Recently it has been discovered, and now it is on the verge of being gentrified. For some of us who live here, that's bad.

Well-organized
and unified
paragraph:
describes life
cycle of city
neighborhoods

Cities are often assigned human characteristics, one of which is a life cycle: They have a birth, a youth, a middle age, and an old age. A neighborhood is built and settled by young, vibrant people, proud of their sturdy new homes. Together, residents and houses mature, as families grow larger and extensions get built on. Eventually, though, the neighborhood begins to show its age. Buildings sag a little, houses aren't repainted as quickly, and maintenance slips. The neighborhood may grow poorer, as the young and upwardly mobile find new jobs and move away, while the older and less successful inhabitants remain.

Decay, renewal,
or redevelopment
awaits aging
neighborhoods

One of three fates awaits the aging neighborhood. Decay may continue until the neighborhood becomes a slum. It may face urban renewal, with old buildings being razed, and ugly, new apartment houses taking their place. Finally, it may undergo redevelopment, in which government encourages the upgrading of existing housing stock by offering low-interest loans or outright grants. This last possibility would mean that the original character of the neighborhood may be retained or restored, allowing the city to keep part of its identity.

Organization:
example
of Hoboken,
New Jersey

An example of redevelopment at its best is Hoboken, New Jersey. In the early 1970s Hoboken was a dying city, with run-down housing and many abandoned buildings. However, low-interest loans enabled some younger residents to begin to refurbish their homes, and soon the area began to show signs of renewed vigor. Outsiders moved in and rebuilt some of the abandoned houses. Today, whole blocks have been restored,

Effects of
redevelopment
on Hoboken

and neighborhood life is active again. The city does well, too, because property values are higher and so are property taxes. There, at least for my neighborhood, is the rub.

Transition:
writer moves
from example of
Hoboken to his
Lakeview Terrace
neighborhood

Lakeview Terrace is a demographic potpourri of students and families, young professionals and elderly retirees, homeowners and renters. It's a quiet street where kids can play safely and the neighbors know each other. Most of the houses are fairly old and look it, but already some redevelopment has begun. Recently, several old houses were bought by a real estate company, rebuilt, and sold as condominiums; the new residents drive BMWs and keep to themselves. The house where I live is owned by a young professional couple—he's an architect—and they have renovated the place to what it must have looked like when it was new. They did a nice job, too. These two kinds of development are the main forms of gentrification, and so far they have done no real harm.

Describes
"gentrification"
to date

Redevelopment
causes property
values to
increase, which
causes property
taxes to rise

The city is about to start a major property tax reappraisal, however. Because of the renovations, the houses on Lakeview Terrace are currently worth more than they used to be; soon there will be a big jump in property taxes. That's when a lot of people will be hurt—possibly even evicted from their own neighborhood.

Organization:
effects of
gentrification on
local property
owners

Clem is a retired General Electric employee who has lived on Lakeview for over thirty years and who owns his home. About three years ago some condos were built on the lot next door, which didn't please Clem—he says they just don't fit in. With higher property taxes, however, it may be Clem who no longer fits in. At the very least, since he's on a fixed income, he will have to make sacrifices in order to stay. Ryan works as a mailman and also owns his Lakeview Terrace home, which is across the street from the houses that were converted into condos: same cause, same effect.

Organization:
effects of
gentrification
on renters

Then there are those who rent. As landlords have to pay higher property taxes, they will naturally raise rents at least as much (and maybe more, if they've spent money on renovations of their own). Some renters won't be able to afford the increase and will have to leave. "Some renters" almost certainly includes me, as well as others who have lived on Lakeview Terrace much longer than I have. In fact, the exodus has already begun, with the people who were displaced by the condo conversions.

Conclusion

Of course, many people would consider what's happening on Lakeview Terrace a genuine improvement in every way, resulting not only in better-looking houses but also in a better class of people. I dispute that. The new people may be more affluent than those they displace, but certainly not "better," not by any standard that matters. Gentrification may do wonders for a neighborhood's aesthetics, but it certainly can be hard on its soul.

Restatement
of thesis

Analyzing Kevin Cunningham's Cause and Effect Analysis: Questions for Discussion

1. According to Cunningham, in what way are cities like humans? What does he describe as the three possible outcomes for aging neighborhoods?
2. Cunningham presents this causal chain: Redevelopment (cause) increases property values (effect), which in turn increases property taxes upon re-assessment by the city (effect), which leads to the displacement of poorer residents (effect). What other effects of redevelopment can you think of?
3. Cunningham decries the gentrification of his neighborhood, but a neighborhood descending into disrepair is not a desirable alternative. What do you think Cunningham would like to see happen on Lakeview Terrace? How can a neighborhood fend off decay while still maintaining its "soul"?
4. Would the essay have benefited if Cunningham had proposed and speculated about a viable alternative to gentrification? Explain.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS AS A WRITING STRATEGY

As you plan, write, and revise your cause and effect analysis, be mindful of the writing process guidelines described in Chapter 2. Pay particular attention to the basic requirements and essential ingredients of this writing strategy.

► Planning Your Cause and Effect Analysis

ESTABLISH YOUR FOCUS. Decide whether your essay will propose causes, talk about effects, or analyze both causes and effects. Any research you do and any questions you ask will depend on how you wish to concentrate your attention. For example, let's say that as a reporter for the school paper, you are writing a story about a fire that destroyed an apartment building in the neighborhood, killing four people. In planning your story, you might focus on the cause of the fire: Was there more than one cause? Was carelessness to blame? Was the fire of suspicious origin? You might focus on the effects of

the fire: How much damage was done to the building? How many people were left homeless? What was the impact on the families of the four victims? Or you might cover both the reasons for this tragic event and its ultimate effects, setting up a sort of causal chain. Such focus is crucial as you gather information. For example, student Kevin Cunningham decided early on that he wanted to explore what would happen to his neighborhood (the effects) if gentrification continued.

DETERMINE YOUR PURPOSE. Once you begin to draft your essay and as you continue to refine it, make sure your purpose is clear. Do you wish your cause and effect analysis to be primarily informative, speculative, or argumentative? An informative essay allows readers to say, "I learned something from this. I didn't know that the fire was caused by faulty wiring." A speculative essay suggests to readers new possibilities: "That never occurred to me before. The apartment house could indeed be replaced by an office building." An argumentative essay convinces readers that some sort of action should be taken: "I have to agree—fire inspections should occur more regularly in our neighborhood." In his essay on gentrification, Cunningham uses cause and effect analysis to question the value of redevelopment by examining what it does to the soul of a neighborhood. Whatever your purpose, be sure to provide the information necessary to carry it through.

FORMULATE A THESIS STATEMENT. All essays need a strong, clear thesis statement. When you are writing an essay using cause and effect, your thesis statement should clearly present either a cause and its effect(s) or an effect and its cause(s). As a third approach, your essay could focus on a complex causal chain of events. Here are a few examples from this chapter:

- "What has the telephone done to us, or for us, in the hundred years of its existence?" (page 438) This opening sentence signals that the essay will explore the effects of a single cause, the telephone.
- "On March 28, 1979, at 3:53 a.m., a pump at the Harrisburg plant failed." (page 439) Here, the pump failure introduces a causal chain of events leading to the disaster at Three Mile Island.
- "Recently [our neighborhood] has been discovered, and now it is on the verge of being gentrified. For some of us who live here, that's bad." (page 443) The first sentence asserts how one trend followed another while the second gives the author's opinion of those trends.

When you begin to formulate your thesis statement, keep these examples in mind. You can find other examples of thesis statements in the essays throughout this book. As you begin to develop your thesis statement, ask yourself, "What is my point?" Next, ask yourself, "What approach to a

cause and effect essay will be most useful in making my point?" If you can't answer these questions yet, write some ideas down and try to determine your main point from these ideas.

► Organizing and Writing Your Cause and Effect Analysis

AVOID OVERSIMPLIFICATION AND ERRORS OF LOGIC. Sound and thoughtful reasoning, while present in all good writing, is central to any analysis of cause and effect. Writers of convincing cause and effect analysis must examine their material objectively and develop their essays carefully, taking into account any potential objections that readers might raise. Therefore, do not jump to conclusions or let your prejudices interfere with the logic of your interpretation or the completeness of your presentation. In gathering information for his essay, Kevin Cunningham discovered that he had to distinguish between cause and effect and mere coincidence:

You have to know your subject, and you have to be honest. For example, my downstairs neighbors moved out last month because the rent was raised. Somebody who didn't know the situation might say, "See? Gentrification." But that wasn't the reason—it's that heating costs went up. This is New England, and we had a cold winter; gentrification had nothing to do with it. It's something that is just beginning to happen, and it's going to have a big effect, but we haven't actually felt many of the effects here yet.

Be sure that you do not oversimplify the cause and effect relationship you are writing about. A good working assumption is that most important matters cannot be traced to a single verifiable cause; similarly, a cause or set of causes rarely produces a single isolated effect. To be believable, your analysis of your topic must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the surrounding circumstances; there is nothing less convincing than the single-minded determination to show one particular connection. For example, someone writing about how the passage of a tough new crime bill (cause) has led to a decrease in arrests in a particular area (effect) will have little credibility unless other possible causes—socioeconomic conditions, seasonal fluctuations in crime, the size and budget of the police force, and so on—are also examined and taken into account. Of course, to achieve coherence, you will want to emphasize the important causes or the most significant effects: Just be careful not to lose your reader's trust by insisting on an oversimplified "X leads to Y" relationship.

The other common problem in cause and effect analysis is lack of evidence in establishing a cause or an effect. This error is known as the "after this, therefore because of this" fallacy (in Latin, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*). In attempting to discover an explanation for a particular event or

circumstance, a writer may point to something that merely preceded it in time, assuming a causal connection where none has in fact been proven. For example, if you have dinner out one evening and the next day come down with stomach cramps, you may blame your illness on the restaurant where you ate the night before; you do so without justification, however, if your only proof is the fact that you ate there beforehand. More evidence would be required to establish a causal relationship. The *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy is often harmlessly foolish (“I failed the exam because I lost my lucky key chain”). It can, however, lead writers into serious errors of judgment and blind them to more reasonable explanations of cause and effect. And, like oversimplification, such mistakes in logic can undercut a reader’s confidence. Make sure that the causal relationships you cite are, in fact, based on demonstrable evidence and not merely on a temporal connection.

USE OTHER RHETORICAL STRATEGIES. Although cause and effect analysis can be used effectively as a separate writing strategy, it is more common for essays to combine different strategies. For example, in an essay about a soccer team’s victories, you might use comparison and contrast to highlight the differences between the team’s play in the two losses and in five victories. Narration from interviews might also be used to add interest and color. An essay about the Internet might incorporate the strategy of argumentation as well as definition to defend the openness and effectiveness of the Internet. The argument could analyze exactly how the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, while definition could be used to focus the subject matter to better achieve your purpose. By combining strategies, you can gain both clarity and forcefulness in your writing.

Be aware, however, that you must always keep the purpose of your essay and the tone you wish to adopt in the front of your mind when combining strategies. Without careful planning, using more than one rhetorical strategy can alter both the direction and the tone of your essay in ways that detract from, rather than contribute to, your ability to achieve your purpose.

As you read the essays in this chapter, consider all of the writing strategies the authors have used to support their cause and effect analysis. How have these other strategies added to or changed the style of the essay? Are there strategies that you might have added or taken out? What strategies, if any, do you think you might use to strengthen your cause and effect essay?

► Revising and Editing Your Cause and Effect Analysis

SELECT WORDS THAT STRIKE A BALANCED TONE. Be careful to neither overstate nor understate your position. Avoid exaggerations like “there can be no question” and “the evidence speaks for itself.” Such diction is usually an-

noying and undermines your interpretation. Instead, allow your analysis of the facts to convince readers of the cause and effect relationship you wish to suggest. At the same time, no analytical writer convinces by continually understating or qualifying information with words and phrases such as *it seems that, perhaps, maybe, I think, sometimes, most often, nearly always, or in my opinion.* While it may be your intention to appear reasonable, overusing such qualifying words can make you sound unclear or indecisive, and it renders your analysis less convincing. Present your case forcefully, but do so honestly and sensibly.

SHARE YOUR DRAFT WITH OTHERS. Try sharing the draft of your essay with other students in your writing class to make sure that your analysis makes sense. Ask them if there are any parts that they do not understand. Have them tell you what they think is the point of your analysis. If their answers differ from what you intended, have them indicate the passages that led them to their interpretations so that you can change your text accordingly. To maximize the effectiveness of conferences with your peers, use the guidelines presented on page 36. Feedback from these conferences often provides one or more places where you can start revising.

QUESTION YOUR OWN WORK WHILE REVISING AND EDITING. Revision is best done by asking yourself key questions about what you have written. Begin by reading, preferably aloud, what you have written. Reading aloud forces you to pay attention to every word, and you are more likely to catch lapses in the logic. After you have read your paper through, answer the questions for revising and editing below and on the following page, and make the necessary changes.

For help with twelve common writing problems, see Chapter 16, “Editing for Grammar, Punctuation, and Sentence Style.”

Questions for Revising and Editing: Cause and Effect Analysis

1. Why do I want to use cause and effect: to inform, to speculate, or to argue? Does my analysis help me achieve my purpose?
2. Is my topic manageable for the essay I wish to write? Have I effectively established my focus?
3. Does my thesis statement clearly state either the cause and its effects or the effect and its causes?
4. Have I identified the nature of my cause and effect scenario? Is there a causal chain? Have I identified immediate and remote causes? Have I distinguished between possible and actual causes and effects?

(continued on next page)

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5. Have I been able to avoid oversimplifying the cause and effect relationship I am writing about? Are there any errors in my logic?
6. Is my tone balanced, neither overstating nor understating my position?
7. Is there another rhetorical strategy that I can use with cause and effect to assist me in achieving my purpose? If so, have I been able to implement it with care so that I have not altered either the direction or the tone of my essay?
8. Have I taken every opportunity to use words and phrases that signal cause and effect relationships?
9. Have I used *affect* and *effect* properly?
10. Have I avoided the phrase *the reason is because*?
11. Have I avoided errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics? Is my sentence style as clear, smooth, and persuasive as possible?