

Analyze Cause and Effect

When you analyze cause and effect, you find how one event leads to the next. It is important to find evidence that one event caused another. If one event happened earlier than another, it did not necessarily cause the later event. Understanding causes and effects can help you solve problems.

1 Choose a starting point of observation.

When trying to understand a historical event, choose the time of that event. If you are trying to understand a current event, you can work backward from a starting point in the present.

2 Consider earlier events to try to find connections to your starting point, including any language that signals causes. Put the evidence together to identify true causes.

When reading, look for events that come before your starting point. Decide whether these earlier events caused later events. Search for words that signal cause, such as “reason,” “because,” and “led to.” Make sure that there is evidence showing that the earlier events caused the later events and did not just happen earlier.

3 Consider later events to try to find connections to your starting point, including any language that signals effects. Put the evidence together to determine true effects.

Look for events that come after your starting point. Decide whether these later events are effects of earlier events. Search for words that signal effect, such as “led to,” “so,” and “therefore.” Make sure that there is evidence showing that these later events were caused by earlier events and did not just happen later.

4 Summarize the cause-effect relationship and draw conclusions.

Once you have found the cause-and-effect relationships between different events, describe these relationships. Draw a diagram that shows these relationships. Draw conclusions about any patterns that you see.