Writing Skills: Cause and Effect Paragraphs

What Makes a Good Cause/Effect Paragraph?

- It is about either causes or effects. In one paragraph, you cannot address both. You should say early in your paragraph whether you are talking about causes or effects.

- It is about a topic that is easily managed in one paragraph. Is the topic small enough that it can be covered in one paragraph?

- It recognizes the complexity of the situation. There is often more than one cause for an event of situation, and there is often more than one result. The results can be positive, negative, or both.

- It is sufficiently detailed. As with all good paragraphs, don’t make your reader guess what you want to say. Give examples.

Steps for Writing the Cause/Effect Paragraph

1. As you know, your writing should begin with some brainstorming. Think about your topic—what do you want to say about it? Use a mind map to start to collect some ideas.

2. Make a plan for your paragraph.

3. Write your first draft. Don’t worry about getting everything perfect at this stage; just get your ideas on paper. Have you recognized and indicated that causes or effects are rarely straightforward, and that there may be complicated factors at work? Make sure you have included enough detail.

4. Revise your draft. You may want to use words like Firstly, Secondly, and Finally to introduce your various points.

5. Edit your paragraph and write your final draft. Now that your ideas are in place, you can focus on grammar, spelling, word choice, and punctuation.

Adapted from: College Skills: Intermediate English
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