

Drafting Body Paragraphs: Purpose-Based Organization Strategies Cause-Effect

There are many different strategies designed for organizing specific types of body paragraphs, including cause-effect, problem-solution, comparison-contrast and chronological. You must identify the purpose of the paragraph before you begin writing and then seek out the appropriate organizational strategy for writing a paragraph with that specific purpose. This handout discusses the **cause-effect strategy** in detail.



First, there's one thing you should know about this handout and its connection to another Academic Center handout. This handout is best used in conjunction with the Academic Center handout *Drafting Body Paragraphs: CECC: An Internal Organization Strategy*, which discusses a method of paragraph development that focuses on claim, evidence, commentary and conclusion. The **CECC method** accounts for the labeling in brackets of the example paragraphs in this handout. These labels in brackets are merely meant to show how each purpose-based organization strategy also corresponds with the CECC method.

Cause-effect paragraphs seek to illustrate the relationship(s) between two or more events by revealing **why** or **how** something happened. Therefore, it's not enough simply to state the cause(s) and the effect(s). The cause-effect paragraph should be organized in a way that focuses on the **connection(s)** between the cause(s) and the effect(s). Keep in mind that there are several ways to develop a cause-effect paragraph: you can discuss how one cause led to one effect, how one cause led to several effects, how several causes led to one effect, or many other variations of the process. Furthermore, a cause and effect relationship may not necessarily be explained in its entirety in a single paragraph. If the process that is being described is quite detailed or complicated, a **paragraph block** might work better.

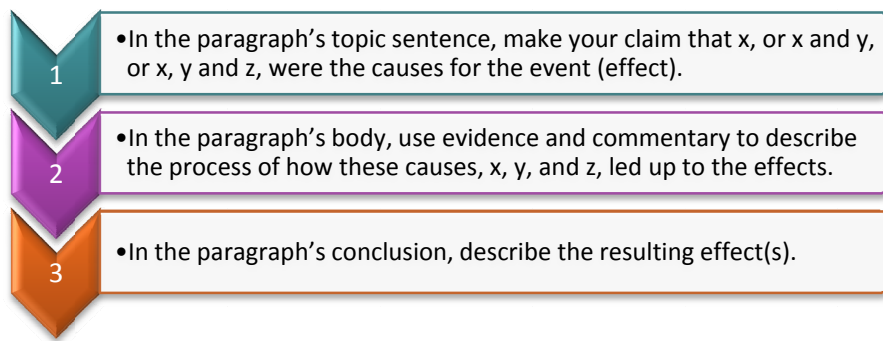
A **paragraph block** is a series of several paragraphs which share the same topic sentence. The paragraph block has the same basic function as a single paragraph – to explore a main idea in detail. A paragraph block is used when the main idea being covered features several different components or is especially detailed. The paragraph block will still follow the same organizational pattern; the content will just be revealed over the course of several paragraphs rather than contained within a single paragraph.

Regardless of the way that you choose to develop a cause-effect paragraph or paragraph block, the following organizational structure can apply:

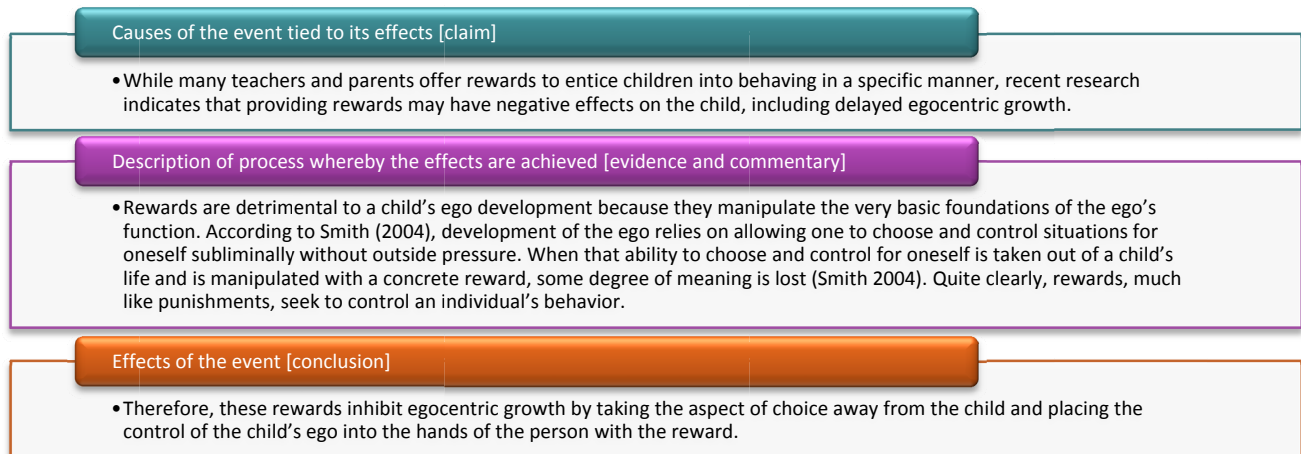


Visit us on the web at www.uhv.edu/ac

Email at tutor@uhv.edu University West, room 129 (361) 570-4288



Let's take a look at an example of a successful cause- effect paragraph:



In this example paragraph, the **cause** is the offering of rewards to children, the **effect** is the delay in egocentric growth, and the **description of the process** explains why the offering of rewards leads to a delay in egocentric growth.

Not only is the cause and effect pattern present, but the components of the **CECC pattern** also emerge. For example, in the description of the process section, the **evidence**, or statements about how ego development relies on the ability to choose and control for oneself, is cited according to Smith. However, the writer's **commentary** which follows these statements interprets and summarizes this evidence for the reader. More information on providing and signaling commentary is available in our handout *Signal Your Commentary on Source Material*.

This cause-effect pattern is most useful in journalistic writing and historical writing, but it may also be used in other kinds of papers. In particular, this pattern may work well in the background section(s) of different types of papers.

Although this handout discussed the cause-effect approach to paragraph organization, there are many other methods you can use to organize information within a specific paragraph. Additionally, while the information presented in this handout is tailored toward paragraph development, this organizational strategies discussed can be applied as overall organization strategies for research papers or can be used as organization strategies for paragraph blocks within a larger paper.

Copyright 2008 by the Academic Center, the University of Houston-Victoria, and Candice Chovanec Melzow.

Created 2007 by Candice Chovanec Melzow.



Visit us on the web at www.uhv.edu/ac

Email at tutor@uhv.edu University West, room 129 (361) 570-4288