



# Social Studies Strategies: Determining Cause and Effect

## Determining Cause and Effect

### What:

Determining Cause and Effect is a strategy to find a causal relationship between or among events, conditions, or behaviors.

### Why:

This strategy gives reasons and explanations for events, conditions, or behaviors. It is an analysis tool to display possible cause of a specific condition or event, or the possible effects of a specific condition or event.

### How:

Often cause and effect are subtle and hard to distinguish. Be sure not to confuse cause and effect. To determine the cause of something, ask why it happened. To determine the effect of a cause, ask what happened. Three general causal relations can exist when a cause and effect relationship exists:

- Necessary cause – one that must be present for the effect to occur.
- Sufficient cause – one that can product an effect unaided, though there maybe more than one sufficient cause of a given effect.
- Contributory cause – one that helps to produce an effect but cannot do so by itself.

Questions that can be raised to identify cause-and-effect relationships:

- Have I assumed a cause-and-effect relationship where none exists?
- Have I assumed only one cause when many causes may be appropriate?
- Have I incorrectly assumed a causal relationship between two events where one immediately follows another?
- Are there single or multiple causes?
- Are there single or multiple effects?
- Is a chain reaction involved?

Once a cause-and-effect relationship has been identified, then the task becomes to determine the relationship. Several kinds of causes exist.

- The primary cause (also know as the main cause, the necessary cause, or first cause) is the basis for a causal chain of events.
- The secondary cause or effect is usually an ancillary cause that contributed to an effect or an ancillary effect of a cause.
- The short-term cause or effect (also called the immediate cause or effect) is a single, immediately identifiable event.



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- The long-term cause or effect (often referred to as the underlying cause) is an important contributing cause or effect that may be difficult to identify, but in the long run is more important than the immediate causes or effects.

Questions to be raised once a cause-and-effect relationship has been identified:

- To determine causes, ask, “Why did this happen?” or “What are the causes?” or “What are the factors that cause \_\_\_?”
- To determine effects, ask, “What happened because of this?” or “What is the effect or result?” or “What are the factors that resulted from this cause?”
- If a causal chain has been identified, ask “What causal chain of events led to this effect?”

Often, many causes contribute to a single effect, or many effects may result from a single cause. Use GLOBAL PC or PERSIA approach to explore the cause and effect relationships of various aspects of society. Use an appropriate cause-and-effect graphic organizer to organize the information and identify the cause and effect relationship(s). After identifying the causes and effects, then develop a summary statement, make a generalization, or draw a conclusion or inference based on the cause-and effect relationships. Among the cause-and-effect graphic organizers are the causal chain, multiple causes, multiple effects, multiple causes and multiples effects, the herringbone, and the fishbone.

## **When:**

This strategy should be used whenever cause-and-effect relationships are apparent. Social studies, science, literature, and most other subjects are full of cause-and-effect relationships that students are generally unaware of and therefore need to be explicitly identified.



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## Word Clues for Causes

- Because
- This leads to
- For one thing
- Due to
- Hence
- One cause is
- Another is
- For this reason
- For one thing
- Since
- So
- For
- First
- Second
- Another reason is
- If . . . then

## Word Clues for Effects

- Consequently
- As a result
- For this reason
- This leads to
- On account of
- One result is
- Hence
- Later
- A result of this is
- Another result is
- Resulted in
- Therefore, thus
- So
- Then, so
- If . . . then