

Recognizing Cause and Effect

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

cause: an event or action that directly results in another event

effect: the direct outcome of an event or action

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: As you read, ask yourself, "What happens and why?"

- The answer to "What happens?" is likely to be the **effect** in a cause-and effect relationship.
- The answer to "Why is it happening?" is likely to be the **cause**.

EXAMPLE Since the New England colonists found the soil too rocky for farming, they turned to the sea as a source of food and income.

Step 2: Look for signal or clue words. Certain clue words and phrases signal cause and effect relationships.

- Words that signal a **cause** include: *because, since, and due to*.
- Words that signal an **effect** include: *led to, as a result, consequently, and therefore*.

EXAMPLE Western states offered bounties to hunters who shot mountain lions. As a result, the big cats were hunted to near extinction.

Step 3: Look for more clues, and make an inference. If the cause-and-effect relationship is not obvious, look deeper. Sometimes writers do not state cause or effect directly. Instead, the relationship is **implied**. As you try to figure out the implied cause or effect from other clues in the text, you are making inferences about cause and effect relationships.

EXAMPLE Upstate, many farmers have watched their crops dry up and die. Towns have banned lawn watering and car washing. Even so, many water districts are unable to maintain minimum water pressure during the day.

Step 4: Think about multiple causes and effects. More than one cause can contribute to a single effect. More than one effect can stem from a single cause.

EXAMPLE A powerful earthquake struck San Francisco in 1906, starting fires that burned much of the city. In all, more than 2000 people died.