

Answer the Essay & Short Answer Exam Questions Well Part 3: Cause & Effect Questions

FACULTY PROMPTS & PATTERNS OF RESPONSE

Most essay questions contain an Action Word that you can use to help you organize your response to that question. In general, there are six of these Action Words:

Define / Definition of	Analyze / Analysis of	Cause & Effect
Compare / Contrast	Process Analysis / Describe / List	Supported Opinion (Defend/Refute)

3. CAUSE AND EFFECT QUESTIONS

Answering cause and effect questions:

1. Cause and effect questions usually are one of two types: First, the question that gives you a “cause” and asks you to trace the probable “effects” of that cause; and Second, the question that gives you an “effect” and asks you to discuss or analyze the probable “cause(s)” of that effect.
2. Identify what is the cause or effect that you are being asked to analyze. For Example:
 - A. Discuss the impact of a level five hurricane on the gulf coast. (Type 1)The cause in this question is a “level five hurricane” and the effect is the “impact on the gulf coast”.
 - B. What are the cause(s) of dehydration. (Type 2)
 - C. What would be the effects be of a major movement of the plates which make up the San Andreas Fault? (Type 1)
 - D. What were the contributing factors that led to the American Civil War? (Type 2)
3. Outline the cause or effect you are being asked to illustrate.

Strategies to use in answering cause and effect questions:

4. If asked, sketch the relationship between the parts as a way of helping you write your answer without forgetting a component.
5. As you write your essay, take advantage of transitional phrases which will help you make the links between the cause and effect(s) you are analyzing.

Examples of these transitional phrases are:

because	consequently	for this reason	therefore
as a result	hence	for that reason	subsequently
accordingly	thus		

Illustrations of cause and effect answers:

↪ Typical cause and effect questions would look like these:

1. In 100 words or less describe the effects of major movement between the North American and Pacific plates along the San Andreas Fault?
2. Discuss the three approaches psychologists have taken to understand human perception.

↪ Answers to these questions could look like these:

1. The movement of the North American and Pacific crustal plates led to the formation of the mountain ranges on the western coast of North America. As the two plates continue to grind along their boundaries they are potential sources of earthquakes and volcanoes as demonstrated by California's frequent earthquakes.
2. The three approaches to understanding human perception are the computational approach, the constructivist approach and the ecological approach. Psychologists who use the computational approach try to determine the computations a machine would have to perform to solve perceptual problems. By so doing, they believe these computations in machines will help to understand how humans and animals to turn sensory stimuli into a representation of the world.

The computational approach uses much information from two earlier, but still influential, views of perception: the constructivist approach and the ecological approach. The constructivist approach emphasizes the theory that perception is strongly influenced by expectations and inferences built on past experiences, i.e. prior knowledge whereas the ecological approach emphasizes the information provided by the environment.

↪ Avoid Answers that look like these:

1. When the plates move they cause earthquakes and cause all kind of destruction. *(This answer is not precise and does not give your instructor enough information to give you a good grade.)*
2. There are a couple of approaches that look at perception that are old and one that is in use now. *(This answer demonstrates how little you know and will result in a poor grade.)*