

Tools for Instruction

Cause and Effect

Identifying cause-and-effect relationships in text helps readers to make sense of what they read. In literary texts, readers think about cause and effect to understand how the plot develops, while in informational texts, readers learn facts about the way things happen, and why. Even though cause-and-effect relationships are often described clearly for beginning readers, it can still be a challenge for students to think of events as related to each other. Work with students to notice cause-and-effect relationships in their daily lives, and then use modeling and guided practice to help them identify cause and effect in literary and informational texts.

Step by Step 30–45 minutes

1 Introduce and explain cause and effect.

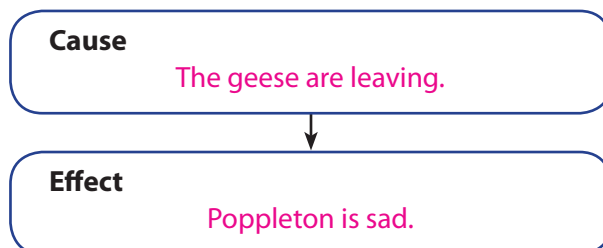
- Introduce the concept of cause and effect through demonstration. Hold your index finger to your lips, and whisper *Shhh*.
- Wait for students to be silent. Then say, *You are now being very quiet. Can anyone tell me why you quieted down just now?* (*Because you touched your finger to your lips.*)
- Say, *When something happens, it is usually because something caused it to happen. This is called cause and effect.*
- Display the words *cause* and *effect*, and read them chorally with students.
- Say, *I put my finger to my lips, and that caused you to quiet down. Another way to say it is that you quieted down because I put my finger to my lips.*
- Explain that your action was the cause, and students' reaction was the effect.
- Repeat the explanation with simple examples, such as opening an umbrella in the rain and lining up after hearing the lunch bell.

2 Model identifying cause and effect in text.

- Say, *Good readers notice what happens in a story. They think about what happens, and then they think about why it happens.*
- Display **Cause and Effect Chart** (page 3), and read aloud a book that contains clear examples of causal relationships, such as *Poppleton in Fall*, by Cynthia Rylant.
- As you read, model how you think about what is happening and why.

It says here that Poppleton is sad. Why is Poppleton sad? We read earlier that the geese are flying south. They are his friends, and Poppleton will miss them. Poppleton is sad because the geese are leaving.

- Record the cause and effect statements on the chart.



3 Provide guided practice.

- As you continue reading, pause directly after an event to ask why it happened. Scaffold understanding with answer choices, and guide students to phrase their answers in full sentences that include the cause and the effect.

Question *Why does Poppleton go to the coat store?*

Choices 1. because he has outgrown his coat
2. because Zacko works there

Answer *(Poppleton goes to the coat store because he has outgrown his coat.)*

- Review the text and illustrations that reinforce students' answers.
- Record new cause-and-effect relationships on the cause and effect chart.

4 Provide independent practice.

- Once you have finished reading, ask additional questions about the story, but do not provide answer choices. Encourage students to use the language of the question in their answer.

Why does Poppleton feel so tired? *(Poppleton feels so tired because he had so many geese to serve.)*

Why is Poppleton upset? *(Poppleton is upset because Zacko does not have a coat that will fit him.)*

- Have students locate details in the text or illustrations to support their answers.

Connect to Writing Have students draw pictures to represent one example of cause and effect from the story. Using the cause and effect chart as a model, have students divide a sheet of paper into two horizontal boxes. Direct them to label the top box *Cause* and the bottom box *Effect*, then draw an arrow to connect the two. Students can write or dictate a sentence to tell about each picture.

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty connecting cause and effect outside of text	providing repeated practice establishing cause and effect in everyday activities. Provide the first part of the statement, and have students complete it. <i>You all wore coats today because _____. (it is cold outside)</i> <i>Danijela is not here today because _____. (she is sick)</i>
difficulty connecting cause and effect in text	using the illustrations to guide practice identifying what is happening and why. <i>Poppleton is shivering in this picture. Why is he shivering? (because his coat is too small)</i> <i>Poppleton looks proud in this picture. Why is Poppleton proud? (because he is wearing his new coat)</i>

Name _____

Cause and Effect Chart

Title _____

Cause



Effect



Cause



Effect