Why Did That Happen? Chains in Order

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 3
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Cause and effect
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to describe cause-and-effect chains in order. They build a paper chain and retell it with time and link words.

Curriculum links

- Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect [2]
- Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships [1]

Learning objectives

- Students will describe a cause-and-effect chain in order using time words.
- Students will find causes and effects in a text and explain why each step happens.
- Students will retell steps in a procedure using because, so, then, and finally.

Success criteria

- I can find the cause and the effect in a text.
- I can put steps in order with first, next, then, finally.
- I can explain why using because and so.

What students already know

Ask: What made the puddle dry up yesterday? Listen for a why and a what happened. Quick thumbs up if you can say a because sentence.

Key words

cause	why something happens [3]
effect	what happens as a result [3]
sequence	the order that steps or events come in
chain	linked steps where one result starts the next step [4]
because	a linking word that tells the reason why [15]

Materials

- Slides 1-4, 6-7, 9-12
- Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00) on slide 6
- pre-cut paper strips
- markers
- tape or glue sticks
- model paper chain with 4 links

Before the lesson

- Print or cut enough paper strips for 4 links per pair plus a few extra
- Test Slide 6 Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00) with sound and captions
- Make a 4-link model chain for the mud text and tape two starter links for support

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- Set desks for pairs with markers and tape or glue sticks in trays

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Hooks students with dominoes and recalls cause and effect.

YOU DO

1. Show title Slide 1 and objectives Slide 2 and read them in kid words.
2. Tip the model paper domino chain and say the hook line.
3. Ask what made each link fall and what happened after it fell.
4. Link answers to today's goal of saying what happened and why.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the falling chain and call out what fell first, next, and last.
2. Turn and tell a neighbor one why and one what happened.
3. Share one because sentence with the class.

Say: Watch what happens if I tip this first paper domino — one fall makes the next one fall, and the next one, and the next one! Today we will find causes and effects in reading and put steps in order. I can say what happened and why.

Ask: What was the cause when the second link fell? (The first link fell on it; cause is why it happened.) · What was the effect? (The second link fell; effect is what happened after.)

Check understanding: All give thumbs up, sideways, or down for: I can say a because sentence. Reteach with one more fall if many are unsure.

Support: Let unsure students repeat after you: It fell because the first one pushed it. **Stretch:** Ask ready students to predict what would happen if a middle link was missing.

Use: Slides 1–2

5–15 min **Teaching** 10 min · Whole class

Teaches cause, effect, and signal words for order and reason.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3 cause and effect map and read cause = why and effect = what happened.
2. Show Slide 4 and explain a cause is something that produces an event and an effect is what results [3].
3. Point to first, next, last for time order and because, so for the link.
4. Model with undone shoelaces leading to tripping, noting one cause can have multiple effects [9].

STUDENTS DO

1. Repeat the time words and link words after the teacher.
2. Point to the cause and the effects in the shoelace example.
3. Say the model sentence to a partner using because and so.

Say: Cause tells why something happened. Effect tells what happened after. A cause comes before its effect. Words like first, next, then, and finally show order. Words like because, since, so, and as a result show why [15].

Worked example: Cause: shoelaces are untied. Effect 1: a student trips. Effect 2: the knee gets scraped. I say: First, the shoelaces were untied. Next, a student tripped because the laces caught a shoe, so the knee got scraped.

Ask: Which part tells why: shoelaces untied or tripped? (Shoelaces untied; that is the cause, the why.) · Which words told us the order? Which told us why? (First and next told order; because and so told why.)

Check understanding: Hold up one finger for cause and two for effect as you read two parts. Re-model if mixed up.

Support: Post cause = why and effect = what happened with dot and star symbols to point to. **Stretch:** Ask ready students to add a second effect to the shoelace chain with as a result.

Use: Slides 3–4

15–25 min **Guided viewing** 10 min · Whole class

Practices hearing why it happened and what happened next.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 6 and tell students to listen for why it happened and spot what happened next.
2. Play Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00) about story chains.
3. Pause twice to ask for the cause and the effect in order.
4. Show Slide 7 to restate every effect has a cause that came first.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch and listen for time and link words.
2. Call out first, next, because, and so when heard.
3. Retell one chain from the video with a neighbor in order.

Say: Listen for why it happened. Spot what happened next. Clap softly when you hear first, next, because, or so. After we watch, we will put the steps back in order.

Worked example: After the clip: First, clouds gathered. Next, rain fell, so puddles formed. The rain was the cause, the puddles were the effect that came after.

Ask: Did the effect come before or after its cause? (After; the cause comes first.) · How do first, next, and last help us? (They show time order, the sequence of events.)

Check understanding: Cold-call two pairs to retell one video chain with because. Replay 30 seconds if order is mixed.

Support: Give sentence frame: First ___, next ___, so ___. **Stretch:** Ask ready students to explain the chain backward starting from the last effect using since.

Use: Slides 6–7, Video clip 1 (0:00–5:00)

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25–40 min **Main activity** 15 min · Pairs

Builds and explains a four-step causal chain in order.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 10 as a word bank for time words and cause words.
2. Read aloud the 4-sentence mud text in full and model ordering 4 strips.
3. Model writing one step per strip, adding first, next, then, finally, and linking them so each effect becomes the cause for yet another effect [4].
4. Send pairs to lay strips in order, write, link, and practice saying the chain with because and so.

STUDENTS DO

1. Lay 4 strips in order and write one step on each.
2. Add first, next, then, finally and link strips with tape or glue.
3. Point to each link and say the chain aloud with because and so.

Say: First, wet mud sits in the hot sun. Next, the sun dries the mud. Then, the dry mud cracks. Finally, the cracked mud breaks into dust. We will write one step on each strip and link them. Point and say the chain with first, next, then, finally, because, and so.

Worked example: Link 1 FIRST: wet mud sits in hot sun. Link 2 NEXT: sun dries the mud because the heat warmed it. Link 3 THEN: dry mud cracks so cracks appear. Link 4 FINALLY: cracked mud breaks into dust as a result. I point and read all four in order without skipping.

Ask: Why did the mud crack? (Because the sun dried it first; the drying caused the cracking.) · Which word shows order and which shows the reason? (Next and then show order; because and so show the reason.)

Check understanding: Walk with checklist for 4 links in order with time words; fix order on the spot by re-laying strips.

Support: Give two links already taped together with the time word written in light pencil to trace. **Stretch:** Add a fifth link that predicts one more effect later that day.

Use: Slide 10

40–50 min **Partner talk** 10 min · Pairs

Practices describing steps in order with time and cause words.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 question and read the three sentences aloud.
2. Model retelling two connected steps with a time word and because.
3. Have Student A retell first to next, then Student B retell next to last.
4. Listen in and fix order or link words.

STUDENTS DO

1. Student A says the first two steps with first, next, and because.
2. Student B adds the last step with last and so.
3. Repeat with voices clear and point to imaginary first, next, last.

Say: First, strong wind blew. Next, a branch fell. Last, the path was blocked. Tell your partner the chain using first, next, because and so. Tell why each step made the next step happen.

Worked example: First, strong wind blew. Next, a branch fell because the wind pushed it, so it dropped to the ground. Last, the path was blocked as a result, since the branch lay across it.

Ask: What caused the branch to fall? (The strong wind blew first and pushed it.) · What happened because the branch fell? (The path was blocked; that is the last effect.)

Check understanding: Ask three pairs to perform; listen for first, next, because, so. Model again if because is missing.

Support: Provide sentence frame: First ___, next ___, so ___. **Stretch:** Explain what would happen if one middle step was skipped.

Use: Slide 11

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Checks cause, order, and link words against success criteria.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 12 true or false and read each line aloud.
2. Take votes and fix with because sentences.
3. Return to objectives and have students rate I can statements.
4. Give exit ticket on paper.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote true or false and correct false lines aloud.
2. Say one mud-chain link using a time word and because.
3. Answer the 3-question exit ticket on paper.

Say: A cause tells why something happened. It is the reason. An effect happens after its cause. First, next, and last show time order. Show me true or false with thumbs. Then show me you can do it on your own.

Ask: An effect happens before its cause — true or false? (False; effect comes after.) · First, next, and last show time order — true or false? (True; they show sequence.)

Check understanding: Collect exit tickets; if many miss order or because, reteach tomorrow with the seed steps.

Support: Read exit ticket aloud and let students answer by circling and pointing to chain. **Stretch:** Ask ready students to rewrite one exit answer using since without changing meaning.

Use: Slide 12

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Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Saying the effect came before its cause	Chain read backward or because points to later step	Re-lay links left to right and ask what had to happen first; the cause comes before the effect [3].
Listing steps without time or link words	Retell has events but no first, next, because, or so	Point to Slides 9–10 bank and insert first, next, then, finally and because, so, as a result [15].
Confusing one cause with its chain of effects	Only names the first cause and last effect, skips middle link	Touch each link and say how each effect becomes the next cause in a causal chain [4].

Support

- Give two links already taped together with the time word written in light pencil to trace

Stretch

- Add a fifth link that predicts one more effect later that day

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target pairs during Main activity; help lay strips left to right, trace time words, and prompt First ___, next ___, so ___ aloud.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
Put in order: cracks, dust, wet mud in sun. What is first?	First, wet mud sits in hot sun.
Why did the dry mud crack?	Because the sun dried it.
Finish with time and link words: ___ the mud cracked, ___ it broke into dust.	Then the mud cracked, so / as a result it broke into dust.

Homework

Tell your mud paper chain to someone at home using first, next, then, finally, because, and so.

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