English 111
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Essay #5: Justifying an Evaluation

Overview

Have you ever discouraged a friend from going to a popular restaurant, citing the slow service and high prices? Perhaps you decided against purchasing an item once you realized it didn't meet your specifications? In day-to-day life, we frequently make these kinds of evaluations. Evaluation will also be an important skill during your college and teaching careers: there will be occasions when you will need to evaluate texts and other materials, supporting those evaluations with well-developed, well-supported, and convincing analyses. It's important in these types of tasks to establish a clear set of standards for your evaluation and to support your judgments with reasons, evidence, and examples.

Audience and Purpose

The scenario: BGSU is planning to publish a "Best of the Web" list, and a select few BGSU students from each degree program have been asked to make recommendations for which sites should be included on the list. Your job is to evaluate one Web site that you think would be of interest of other BGSU students in your degree program to help the editors of the "Best of" list decide if the site should or should not be included on their list.

Your goal here is to come up with **criteria** that make a good Web site and then **apply those criteria** to the site you are evaluating. You may choose any criteria that you feel are important features of a quality site, including (but not limited to): visual design, ease of use/navigation, clarity of written content, interactivity, currency of information, credibility of information, usefulness, unbiased point of view, quick loading time, etc.

Requirements

Your essay should be around <u>four full pages</u> in length, in MLA format. You are not required to use sources for this paper, other than the site itself – please include a printed copy or screen capture of the site with your paper (this does not count toward total page length).

Suggestions for organizing this paper:

1) *Start with an engaging introduction*. You will want to identify the name of site, the individual or organization sponsoring the site, and include a thesis that gives your overall evaluation and preview of the criteria that you used to reach that evaluation. If your site does well on some criteria and not-so-well on others, consider using a "weighted" thesis (for example: *Although it is at times difficult to navigate, the stunning graphics, currency of information, and quality content offered by EduHound.com make it an excellent Web site for education professionals.*)

2) *Three or four "reason" paragraphs*. Each of these paragraphs should 1) introduce <u>one</u> of your criterion, 2) explain why that criterion is important in a quality Web site, 3) give evidence from the site you are evaluating to which you can apply the criterion, and 4) offer a concluding judgment of the evidence based on the criterion you've chosen. <u>Please focus on one criterion per paragraph</u>.

3) A paragraph that introduces, explains, and refutes or accommodates a *counterargument*. Here are some possibilities for counterarguments:
    a. If your overall evaluation of the site is *positive*, your CA would address the *drawbacks* of the site. In the case of the weighted thesis listed above, for example, your CA would discuss the difficult navigation and would then respond by showing

how the other criteria are important enough to outweigh this negative aspect. Similarly, if the overall evaluation of the site is *negative*, then your CA would address any *positive* aspects of the site.

b. If the site performed the same way on ALL of your criteria, your CA would then address those who might think an important criterion (that might change the results) was left out of your evaluation (for example: "Some might argue that flashy, blinking graphics should be considered an important criterion for a quality Web site, and it's true that such graphics do capture the attention of viewers. Mysiterocks.com performs well in this area, employing several flashing banners and animated graphics that could conceivably entertain and delight site visitors. However, such graphics are often more distracting than they are enticing, and no amount of flashy animation can ever make up for a lack in content, poor navigation structure, and inconsistent design. Poor performance on these criteria clearly outweighs any small gain offered by flashy graphics").

4) *A conclusion* that reiterates your thesis – the overall evaluation of the review's quality and effectiveness – in a memorable and satisfying way. This is your last chance to convince the editors to include or not include this site in their publication.

Usage Note:

1) **criterion = singular** ("Another feature that makes Mysite.com an excellent site for educators is its <u>up-to-date information</u>. This **criterion** is important because….")

2) **criteria = plural** ("Ultimately, Mysite.com should not be included in the upcoming "Best of the Web" publication because the site lacks <u>credibility</u>, it is difficult to <u>navigate</u>, and it does not offer any <u>useful educational features</u>. These **criteria** are important to today's educators and therefore…..")

How to include a screen capture (optional):

1) When you are at the page you want to capture, press the "Print Screen" key on your keyboard. The location of this key will vary depending on your computer model, but it's likely above the numbers on your keyboard.

2) Move to your Word document, and place your cursor on the line where you want to insert your screen capture. Go to the "Edit" menu and select "Paste." You may then resize the image accordingly.

Keep up the great work – you're almost done!