Section IV – Evaluation

Evaluation will no doubt be an important part of your life. We all evaluate constantly. We decide if the value warrants the price of clothes, homes, car, and appliances. We evaluate the movies we see and the songs we hear. As we move deeper and deeper into the Information Age, it becomes more and more important to be able to evaluate well. Of course, we are often evaluated as well in our jobs, and in our lives as students. Understanding that an evaluation is valid based on the relevant reasons and support for it is an important skill as you evaluate everything from advertising to web sites. Even studying asks you to perform evaluation. When you study for a test, you evaluate the contents of the class and the text and decide which points are important to remember.

Activity 4.1 – Introduction

☐ Read the introduction to the chapter entitled “Evaluation” on pages 250-251 of your text. Notice the writing assignment you will be doing so that it will be in the back of your mind while you are reading and working with the exemplars. Think about the list of “Writing Situations for Evaluation” on page 252. What else can you add to the list?

Activity 4.2 – Exemplar

☐ Read Amitai Etzioni’s essay “Working at McDonald’s” on pages 253-257.

☐ Do the exercise under “Reading for Meaning” on page 257. The suggestions under the subtitle “If You Are Stuck” will help you focus on specific aspects of the article.

☐ “Reading Like a Writer” on pages 258-262 introduces you to five important aspects of writing evaluations: presenting the subject, asserting an overall judgment, giving reasons and support, counterarguing, and establishing credibility. Work through the reading and annotating
exercise in this section. Notice that, as you work through these exercises, you are looking at how Etzioni used each of these strategies to make his evaluation clear and credible.

Activity 4.3 – More Exemplars

☐ The next section of your book contains three evaluative essays by professional writers and three by student writers. Each of these essays is an exemplar of one of the strategies that you studied in Etzioni’s essay. Read and analyze each of these essays through the “Writing for Meaning” and “Reading Like a Writer” exercises. Be sure not to be so swayed by the author's opinion that you do not read critically.

♦ “Email Culture” by Michael Kinsley pp. 263-267
♦ “Thief II Stresses Stealth over Strength” by Charles Herold pp. 268-272
♦ “Run, Chicken, Run!” by Richard Corliss pp. 273-277
♦ “‘Children Need to Play, Not Compete,’ by Jessica Statsky: An Evaluation” by Chirstine Romano (student essay) pp. 278-284
♦ “Poltergeist: It Knows What Scares You” by Scott Hyder (student essay) pp. 285-290
♦ “Asthma on the Web” by Kristine Potter (student essay) pp. 291-300

Have you started a new folder or section of your notebook to keep these writings and annotations together for your mentor?
Activity 4.4 – Invention

☐ Read through pages 301-305 of your text. Now go back and work through the segments of those pages to find your topic and get ready to write.

☐ Choosing a Subject - pp. 301-302

♦ Make a short list of examples in each bulleted category on pages 301-302.

♦ Circle each example on your list that you know enough about, or can easily find out enough about, to use for the essay.

♦ Highlight those of your circled items about which you have strong feelings.

♦ Choose one of your highlighted responses as your topic for this essay.

☐ Developing Your Argument – pp. 303-305

♦ Work through the exercises in each of these categories to prepare yourself to write.

♦ Exploring Your Subject

♦ Analyzing Your Readers

♦ Considering Your Judgment

♦ Listing Reasons

♦ Finding Support for Your Reasons

♦ Formulating a Working Thesis
Activity 4.5 – Drafting

☐ Read through the material on pages 305-307 entitled “Drafting.”

☐ Answer the six questions under the section “Setting Goals” on page 305-306.

♦ What is my primary purpose in writing this evaluation?

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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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♦ How can I present the subject so that I can inform and interest my readers in my subject?

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♦ How can I assert my judgment effectively?

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♦ How can I give convincing reasons and adequate support for my reasons?

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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
How can I anticipate readers’ reservations?

How can I establish credibility with my readers?

Read through the section on page 306-307 called “Organizing Your Draft.” Using that information and your answers to the questions in the previous section, create an outline for your first draft of the evaluation.

Write your first draft.

Set your draft aside for a few days. Now come back to it and read it critically. (You can use the guide on pages 307-309.) Are there places that don’t work as well as you’d like? Revise those and make sure the draft is your best.

Share your draft with your mentor (and perhaps others as well). Use the guide on pages 307-309 to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your draft.
Activity 4.6 – Revising

- Using the information your mentor and other readers provided, revise your draft. (Don’t forget to save your drafts separately.) The suggestions on pages 309-311 in the “Revising” section are very specific and can help you take what your readers said and apply it to your draft to make improvements. Read each bullet in the section and address any weakness it points to in your essay.

- Notice under the “Editing and Proofreading” section on page 311-312 that evaluation essays may lend themselves to containing sentences with problems in comparison. Make sure each of your comparisons is complete, logical, and clear.

Check for these:

- If you are comparing one member of a group to the others of the group, use other or else.
  
  For example: Nancy sold more Girl Scout cookies than any member of her troop. (There’s a problem here. If Nancy is a member of the troop, how could she have sold more cookies than herself? The sentence needs to be rewritten so that Nancy sold more Girl Scout cookies than any other member of her troop.)

  Another one: Rodney plays the saxophone better than anyone. (Oops, if Rodney is someone, how can he play better than anyone? Rewrite so that Rodney plays the saxophone better than anyone else.)

- Make sure you are comparing two things that are comparable.
  
  For example: Mary's prom dress is prettier than Judy. (Do we really want to compare a dress to a person? I’ll bet the writer meant to say, “Mary’s prom dress is prettier than Judy’s” so that we know we are comparing their dresses.)

- Make sure you have included everything that is needed to make the comparison complete and clear.
For example: Boys worry about dating more than girls. (Wow! I wonder if the writer meant that dating worries boys more than girls worry boys or that boys worry about dating more than girls do. You can see that a sentence could be misleading if the comparison is incomplete.)

Refer to your handbook for more help with incomplete, illogical, or unclear comparisons.

Once the paper is revised, go back and proofread. Look for errors in punctuation, capitalization, usage, mechanics, and spelling.

- Double-check those homonyms because your spell checker won’t catch them.

- Check your paper for mistakes in using essential or nonessential clauses or elements introduced by who, which, or that.

- Check your paper for correct usage of then and than. Remember to use then when referring to time or order and use than when comparing two things.

  - Example using time: First, mix the dry ingredients. Then, add the eggs.
  
  - Example making a comparison: You are taller than I am.

- Also, when using than, be certain that no essential words are missing.

  - Incorrect example: I am closer to my sister than my brother.
  
  - Correct example: I am closer to my sister than to my brother.

Once your essay is edited, share the final draft with your mentor and discuss whether your changes addressed the issues you had discussed earlier.

Both you and your mentor should assess your essay according to the rubric on the following page. Discuss any differences in how you assess the essay.
## Rubric for Evaluation Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Completely</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The introduction captures the interest of the reader.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The introduction clearly presents the subject to be evaluated.</td>
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<td>• The thesis statement is clear.</td>
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<td>• The organization is effective and logical (flows well, uses transitions).</td>
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<td>• The writing conveys the credibility of the author.</td>
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<td>• Complete and logical comparisons are used.</td>
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<td>• The conclusion is strong and effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The essay is free of grammatical, mechanical and punctuation errors.</td>
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