Quick Guide to an Evaluation Essay
Contributor: UWC Staff

Ever read a restaurant review or movie review? These types of reviews are evaluations of the business, products, and/or services. When evaluating, writers should consider the following components:

What are the criteria for these products/services/businesses?

- Without knowing what the criteria are, readers will not have any idea how you (the evaluator) are attempting to formulate your evaluation.
- Example: If I were to judge a restaurant, what are the main criteria for such a business?
  - Service—attention must be given to the customer.
  - Wait time—if it takes two hours to seat me, dinner time has already passed, and now I am starving.
  - Timeliness of food arrival/service—food must be served immediately after having been cooked, with all parties receiving their food at the same time (nothing more awkward than being the only one eating).
  - Quality—The food itself must also be fresh and of a high quality—if I can’t stand it, I can’t eat it.
  - Cleanliness of the restaurant—if my shoes stick to the floor as I walk to my table, I am thoroughly grossed out.
  - Value—Last but not least, what is the value of the food that I am getting? What did this meal cost me, because if I can get the same quality of food at a fast-food place, why am I paying these high prices for low-quality food? One would expect high quality everything for a high-priced restaurant.
- Now, I have just established the criteria by which I will judge restaurant X (and set up my future essay organization).

Considering this essay is an evaluation, writers need to make a clear decision:

- Did restaurant X live up to expectations/standards?
- Did it go above and beyond, being worthy of praise, or was it subpar and worthy of criticism?
- Namely, what was the point in reviewing this business/service/product? Have you answered the “So what?” question?
Prove it. Anyone can say, “That place was terrible!” but can you prove it? How do you prove it? EVIDENCE.

- If your judgment of the restaurant (for example) is coming down on the negative side, your evidence should mostly be about all the negative things that brought you to that decision.
- That said, a concession to the alternative point of view will prove that you are not biased, but that you are open to what might have been positive about restaurant X (just not to the point of sounding wishy-washy and undecided).
- You should be providing your own experience with the business/product/service (for example your experience in the restaurant)–firsthand experience is great for this type of evaluation.
- What do other connoisseurs say? Secondary evidence, which is quoting/paraphrasing what other reviewers/researchers have said about restaurant X, is also important; they may have had a different experience than yours or may provide information about the business/product/service that had previously gone unrecognized.
- What do consumers say about restaurant X? Plenty of places exist to find customer reviews, such as Yelp, to gain the support of actual customers. You could also stand outside restaurant X and do interviews (time consuming, but worthy).

If an Evaluation Essay does not have criteria by which you are judging something, an actual judgment on whatever it is you are evaluating, and plenty of evidence to support your judgment, then readers of your evaluation will ask, “So what? What was the point of me reading this?” This is not the goal. The above listing of criteria will benefit you by setting up your outline, and providing you with direction and organization, which is a higher order concern when writing.