

# Evaluation: The Final Step

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Evaluation, the final step in the Big6 process, is one of the most important tasks for the college student. Many college students seem to have one focus for a paper, presentation, or speech. That one focus – and it is an important focus – is the **grade**.

Now, I am not here to argue that students shouldn't be concerned about grades. Grades have the ability to impact scholarships, grants, academic status, the possibility of staying in college and/or attending graduate school, or even getting a job. Yet, in the higher education Big6 Information Literacy classroom, evaluation goes beyond getting a good grade. Grades only give one view of whether the student did a good job on the information problem – an external view, and usually, that of the professor. It is equally important for students to judge **their own** work.

According to Big6, Evaluation is demonstrated by:

## 6. Evaluation

### 6.1 Judge the product (effectiveness)

### 6.2 Judge the process (efficiency)

When I ask students to tell me what “judge the product” means, a typical response is “did I get a good grade.” Yet, when we take a closer look at Evaluation, one of the steps in judging the product is effectiveness, which presents a deeper level of understanding about the final product, one that is not necessarily reflected in a grade.

## Evaluation: Not Just the Final Step!

So what does it mean to judge one's effectiveness? An information literate college student needs to judge the effectiveness of their product – for example, how well did the process and finished result reflect the requirements of the assignment. Furthermore, the truly information literate student judges effectiveness throughout the entire Big6 process in an iterative process that provides constant feedback.

### *Task Definition*

To achieve the best grade possible, an information literate college student will apply the Big6 stages to the requirements outlined on the syllabus. For example a student needs to ask him or herself “What is my task?” (Big6 #1, Task Definition) or “What information do I need to complete this assignment” (Big6 #2, Information Seeking Strategies). In this manner, evaluating the final product by judging the effectiveness of the paper or presentation becomes part of the bigger picture of information literacy; judging the effectiveness of the product provides students with a method to determine success and overall achievement.

### *Information Seeking Strategies*

When a student judges the effectiveness of his information process, he also assesses the methodology used to determine a task, locate resources, information gathering techniques, use, and synthesis of material. In my library instruction, I frequently instruct students how to judge the effectiveness of the information gathering process. When using Google or other search engines, students will often use the first results that are returned for a keyword search. It's as important to judge the effectiveness of materials in relation to the finished product, as it is to realize the first results from a search engine are not always the best.

### *Location and Access*

Another important aspect of judging effectiveness is to take a close look at one's Location and Access (Big6 #3). When students judge the efficiency of the project or research paper, they often consider how easy it was to find the information they were looking for. If a student has a clear sense of his or her task, and he or she is able to identify important keywords to use in the location and access stage, the result is usually successful.

### *Use of Information/Synthesis*

Still just locating the materials is not enough, because the use and synthesis phases are vitally important to the overall success of the finished product. An evaluation of effectiveness can also address how well the student felt they used the information from the variety of resources and how well they were able to synthesize the information into a coherent, good quality product. Again, the final grade may help in the determination of the evaluation stage, but the information

literate college student should reflect on his or her own role in the process and consider whether he or she could have done a better job of presenting the finished product.

One good way for students to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of their project, research paper, oral presentation, or presentation is to develop a checklist of questions to ask themselves. Questions may be tailored for each project or be more general in nature. Possible questions that students can ask themselves during the Evaluation phase of the Big6, as presented in this flowchart.

Ideally, evaluation is an iterative process that takes place throughout the entire project. When a student practices the evaluation of a finished product, he or she can become more engaged in the learning process, take more responsibility for his or her education, and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in any finished product. Whether a student is writing a paper for an English Composition class, or presenting a technical report during their first job, evaluation of both the process and the finished product can lead to greater understanding and greater achievement.