Evaluating Arguments

This is a hard thing to do, but it is necessary. It is probably also best done before you start writing. You don’t want to evaluate your arguments at the end of your paper and find that they are unsound.

How to make a sound evaluative argument:

Avoid weak argumentative tactics. Examples of unsound or fallacious arguments include: hasty generalizations, stereotypes, faulty analogies, and false assumptions.

Distinguish between legitimate/fair and illegitimate/unfair emotional appeals. Legitimate emotional appeals are based in fact and use language fairly, although competently, for their cause. An unfair emotional appeal overuses biased language (words with strong negative or positive connotations), attacks a person rather than refuting his/her arguments, and relies on red herrings (irrelevant and usually negative things or events which are not really elated to the argument).

Deal with opposing views. Your argument can be greatly strengthened if you consider different points of view. You don’t want your argument to be struck down by the first question your professor writes on your paper, and you can work against this by mentioning (in as a fair a manner as possible) views which oppose your own. Considering opposing views will help you prepare counter-arguments that may find a place in your essay and may strengthen your overall argument.