

Nonfiction Reading Test

Google

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

You know that you're doing something big when your company name becomes a verb. Ask Xerox. In 1959 they created the first plain paper copy machine. It was one of the most successful products ever. The company name Xerox grew into a verb that means "to copy," as in "Bob, can you Xerox this for me?" Around 50 years later, the same thing happened to Google. Their company name grew into a verb that means "to do an internet search." Now everyone and their grandma knows what it means to Google it.

Unlike Xerox, Google wasn't the first company to invent their product, not by a long shot. Lycos released their search engine in 1993. Yahoo! came out in 1994. AltaVista began serving results in 1995. Google did not come out until years later, in 1998. Though a few years difference may not seem like much, this is a major head start in the fast moving world of tech. So how did Google do it? How did they overtake their competitors who had such huge leads in time and money? Maybe one good idea made all the difference.

There are millions and millions of sites on the internet. How does a search engine know which ones are relevant to your search? This is a question that great minds have been working on for decades. To understand how Google changed the game, you need to know how search engines worked in 1998. Back then most websites looked at the words in your query. They counted how many times those words appeared on each page. Then they might return pages where the words in your query appeared the most. This system did not work well and people often had to click through pages and pages of results to find what they wanted.

Google was the first search engine that began considering links. Links are those blue underlined words that take you to other pages when you click on them. Larry Page, cofounder of Google, believed that meaningful data could be drawn from how those links connect. Page figured that websites with many links pointing at them were more important than those that had few. He was right. Google's search results were much better than their rivals. They would soon become the world's most used search engine.

It wasn't just the great search results that led to Google becoming so well liked. It also had to do with the way that they presented their product. Most of the other search engines were cluttered. Their home pages were filled with everything from news stories to stock quotes. But Google's homepage was, and still is, clean. There's nothing on it but the logo, the search box, and a few links. It almost appears empty. In fact, when they were first testing it, users would wait at the home page and not do anything. When asked why, they said that they were, "waiting for the rest of the page to load." People couldn't imagine such a clean and open page as being complete. But the fresh design grew on people once they got used to it.

These days Google has its hands in everything from self-driving cars to helping humans live longer. Though they have many other popular products, they will always be best known for their search engine. The Google search engine has changed our lives and our language. Not only is it a fantastic product, it is a standing example that one good idea (and a lot of hard work) can change the world.

1. Which event happened last?
 - a. Lycos released their search engine.
 - b. Yahoo! released their search engine.
 - c. Google released their search engine.
 - d. Xerox released their copy machine.
2. Which statement would the author of this text most likely **disagree** with?
 - a. Part of Google's success is due to the design of their homepage.
 - b. Google succeeded by following examples of others in their field.
 - c. Google wasn't the first search engine, but it was the best.
 - d. Google's success may not have been possible without Larry Page.
3. Which best expresses the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - a. There are lots and lots of websites connected to the internet.
 - b. Google created a better way to organize search results.
 - c. Many smart people have worked on search engines over the years.
 - d. Older search engines used unreliable methods to order results.
4. What is the author's main purpose in writing this article?
 - a. To explain how Google overtook its rivals
 - b. To compare and contrast Google and Xerox
 - c. To persuade readers to use Google for internet searches
 - d. To discuss how companies can influence language over time
5. Which statement would the author most likely **agree** with?
 - a. Google became successful because its founders were well-connected.
 - b. Google was the world's first and best search engine.
 - c. Google changed the world by solving an old problem in a new way.
 - d. Google's other products are now more important to its success than search.
6. Which best expresses the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
 - a. Links allow people to surf from one website to the next.
 - b. Larry Page's ideas about links helped Google get to the top.
 - c. Larry Page contributed to the internet by inventing the link.
 - d. Google is a website that serves important links to users.
7. Which best explains why the author discusses Xerox in this text?
 - a. He is discussing big companies that came before Google.
 - b. He is explaining how companies must change with the times.
 - c. He is showing how companies can affect our language.
 - d. He is comparing and contrasting Google and Xerox.

NAFES Practice Test

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