

WRITING SAMPLE

Excerpt from **Four Net Neutrality Fact Fails in One Minute**

There's still a lot of confusion about net neutrality and why it matters. And no wonder people are confused, even the media often gets it wrong. Take for example this recent statement from Real Time With Bill Maher.

You have certain companies like Hulu and Amazon, they're streaming videos, and that actually takes up a lot of bandwidth. And so what they're trying to do is make it such that those people pay more. Why should they pay as much as the woman on Etsy selling hair bows?

The point of regulation is not to be neutral. It's to protect the little guy. It's to create competition. Where we don't have competition right now is with broadband providers. There's very few of them. We need to have more competition in this space so that all of this flow continues to flow.

—Monica Mehta on *Real Time with Bill Maher*

Mehta's heart may be in the right place, but her facts are painfully wrong. You can [listen to Monica Mehta's quote on net neutrality](#), it begins at 47:30 and goes on for a minute...one little minute, and yet this statement is riddled with problems.

Mehta Confuses a Web Host With an Internet Service Provider (ISP)

Big companies do pay more for streaming video. They pay that money to their web hosts, which provides the computers where their websites live. Granted, a big company like Netflix probably owns their own servers, but they are definitely paying a lot more for bandwidth than some seller on Etsy.

(Further showing her lack of clarity on this, the crafter on Etsy pays \$0 to a web host—instead she pays Etsy to use their site and then Etsy pays a web host, but that's nitpicking and besides the larger point.)

Every person who visits a web page is downloading data from the web host, so the more visitors a site has, the more they will have to pay in bandwidth fees. These transactions are between the company and the web host, they have nothing to do with the Internet Service Provider (e.g. Comcast).

Comcast is not hosting the sites for these big companies, they simply provide the pipe that sends it into your laptop and living room. They are a middle man, and in the

tradition of middle men everywhere, they now want to charge extra fees. Net neutrality is about not allowing them to do that.

Allowing Comcast and ISPs to Charge Websites Hurts the “Little Guy”

Whenever you have a pay-to-play situation, the big players are the ones who can afford the fees. It's the little guys who will be left with empty pockets. In this particular case, we're talking about two big companies. But if Comcast can charge Netflix more, that's just the beginning. After all, those of us advocating net neutrality aren't passionate about this because we give a damn about Netflix. **If Comcast can slow access to this and that site:**

- **What's to stop them from charging more to political sites that the company has lobbied against?**
- **What's to stop them from extorting small websites (e.g. your sister's wedding registry, or a small site for your obscure hobby) by charging a nuisance fee, under threat of slowing down access to their websites?**
- **What's to stop other companies from paying Internet Service Providers to block their competition?**

If Comcast and other ISPs are given the ability to make some sites faster to access than others, why shouldn't they be allowed to cut off access to some sites all together?

What's beautiful and amazing about the Internet is the unfettered access to whatever ideas we can dream up. There are cute kittens and nasty porn. There are sites for feisty atheists and sites for Bible study. Whatever flavor you crave, there is a website for it. Net neutrality is about protecting that freedom, your freedom, to visit any kind of website. Without that freedom, the Internet will no longer be bottom-up, but instead controlled from the top down, like the boring old cable TV and corporate radio options we had before. No wonder Comcast is eroding net neutrality: they want to reduce the Net to a different variety of what they're already selling.

But I think the rest of us know that the Internet we know and love today is so much more than “57 channels and nuthin's on.” It's a wild west where anyone who wants to hang their sign can have a website, no matter how small or unpopular their voice. That's what we're trying to protect.

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