**REFLECTIVE WRITING**

**What is the purpose of a reflective text?**

The purpose of a reflective text is to bring together details from your experience and course concepts and theories. You will need to consider an interaction, event or episode you experienced that is connected to the topic.

Reflective writing encourages you to consider and comment on your learning experiences - not only WHAT you have learned, but HOW you learned it. Reflecting helps you to:

- Clarify what you have studied.
- Integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge.
- Identify the questions you have.
- Identify what you have yet to learn.
- Provide details from your personal experience.
- Pose questions and draw conclusions. What feelings and perceptions surrounded the experience? How would you explain the situation to someone else? What might this experience mean in the context of your course? What other perspectives, theories or concepts could be applied to the situation?
- Discuss your perceptions of the course and the content.
- Discuss what you found confusing, inspiring, difficult, interesting and why.
- Focus on processes: how you solved a problem, reached a conclusion, found an answer, or reached a point of understanding.
- Write about possibilities, speculations, hypotheses or solutions.
- Make comparisons and connections between what is learnt and prior knowledge, assumptions and experience.
- Reflections on actions for change and evaluate continually.

* It is a good idea to initially brainstorm the answers to these questions on a mindmap.

**Reflective writing strategy**

1. **Describe objectively what happened.** Give the details of what happened. Answer the question ‘What did I do, read, see, hear’?

2. **Interpret the events.**
   Explain your learning: new insights, connections with other learning, your feelings, hypotheses, conclusions. Answer the questions: ‘what was the reason I did this activity?’ / What might it mean?’.

3. **Make judgments connected to observations you have made.** Answer the question: ‘How is this useful?’

4. **Plan how this learning will be applied.** Comment on its relevance to your course, program, future profession, life. Answer the question: ‘How might this learning apply in my future?’

Note: This is a general guideline only. Consult your lecturer and unit outline for all the requirements of your task.

ACPE Student Learning Services 2020
Paraphrasing vs. plagiarism.

Q: Do you need a reference if you paraphrase?
A: Yes. Even though you are not borrowing any language, you will still need to cite the source to indicate that you are borrowing ideas.

Q: If you follow the original sentence structure while replacing occasional words with synonyms, are you paraphrasing?
A: No. This is plagiarising, not paraphrasing.

Have you got the ACPE style and referencing guidelines?

How can I structure my paragraphs?

1. Provide a topic sentence which addresses the focus of the paragraph.
2. Provide details and specific examples from your previous experience including feelings, thoughts, observations.
3. Create links from your experience to course concepts and theories.

Reflective writing do’s and don’ts.

Reflective writing is:
√ Your response to experiences, opinions, events or new information.
√ Your response to thoughts and feelings.
√ A way to explore your learning.
√ A way to gain knowledge of yourself.
√ A means to get clearer about what you are learning.
√ An opportunity to develop your writing skills.
√ A way to add meaning to your study.

Reflective writing is not:
✘ Just relating information, instruction or argument.
✘ Just description, although there may be some descriptive elements such as outlining what something is or how something was done.
✘ A decision or judgement (e.g. about whether something is right or not, good or bad).
✘ Simple problem-solving.
✘ A summary of course structure.
✘ An academic essay or report.

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Reflective writing: Language tips

Language tips for reflective writing.

Reflective writing often includes:

- Formal language and conventions, such as using third person and in-text citations.
- Personal pronouns, such as ‘I’, ‘my’ and ‘we’.
- Descriptive writing: what, when, who.
- Analysis: how, why, what, if.
- Expressive writing: I think, I feel, I believe.
- Technical vocabulary of the area of study.
- Full sentences and complete paragraphs.

What language used in reflective writing?

- First person (I, me, we) can be used when reflecting as you are talking about your personal experiences, observations or opinions.
- Verbs used are commonly those of feeling and thinking, for example, felt, considered, experienced, wondered, remembered, discovered, learned etc.
- Use modal verbs such as may, perhaps or might to modify (strengthen or soften) your opinions.
- Third person should be used when referring to theories or course content.

Avoid overly emotional or subjective language.

Try to avoid emotive or subjective terms. Even though you are expressing your own experiences, you must convey this information in an academic style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The client was very unhappy at the start of the session</td>
<td>The client was visibly distressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher said that the class were really naughty</td>
<td>The teacher report that the students did not behave well in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I remember feeling really worried when I started telling them stuff</td>
<td>I remember feeling very apprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about what I did in the past</td>
<td>when I began to disclose personal information about my past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supervisor said that the clothes I was wearing weren't a very good</td>
<td>The supervisor said that my clothing choice was inappropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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What tense do I write in?

When writing about your own personal reflections and experiences, it is important that you write in the past tense as you are referring to a particular moment in the past: During this time, I observed and analysed learning in the classroom.

However, when linking the information to theory it is common practice to use the present tense as the theories and ideas used are still current. In other words, even though the article may have been written years ago, the article still exists, is currently part of the living knowledge of your discipline, and your reaction to it is happening now: Tran (2012) claims that these students……

Checking for coherence.

When writing a reflective text, it is easy to get your ideas a little jumbled as you try and remember and reflect on your experience. It is a good idea to check your text to make sure it is coherence. This means that it is clear, logical and easy for the reader to follow. To check for coherence, follow these steps:

1. Label paragraphs in the margin – write a few words that sums up the paragraph.
2. Check for clear topic sentences – use the words from point one (words that sum up the paragraph) to create a clear and concise topic sentence.
3. Check paragraphs – make sure that each paragraph has one main idea.
4. Order paragraphs – double check that paragraphs are in a logical order and that there is no repetition of main ideas.
5. Check for transitions between paragraphs – what are the connections between the paragraphs? Add linking words such as: moreover, however, in addition etc.
6. Make sure you signpost – use words that show the progression of the text such as: Briefly, First, etc.
7. Revise the introduction – make sure that there is a clear outline in your intro of what you are going to discuss.

Adapted from: