

Genres in academic writing: Reflective writing

The purpose of reflective writing is to help you learn from a particular practical experience. It will help you to make connections between what you are taught in theory and what you need to do in practice. You reflect so that you can learn.

In reflective writing, you are trying to write down some of the thinking that you have been through while carrying out a particular practical activity, such as writing an essay, teaching a class or selling a product. Through reflection, you should be able to make sense of what you did and why and perhaps help yourself to do it better next time.

You might reflect for many reasons in many ways, for example, in a diary or personal log. But here we are interested in the kind of writing that you do for assessment. You are often asked to provide a record of what you did plus a reflection of how you did it and how you are using what you are taught in your classes and any practical experience you are gaining to do this.

Reflective writing gives you the chance think about what you are doing more deeply and to learn from your experience. You have the opportunity to discover how what you are taught in class helps you with your real-world or academic tasks. Writing your thoughts down makes it easier for you to think about them and make connections between what you are thinking, what you are being taught and what you are doing. Your written reflection will also serve as a source of reference and evidence in the future.

You might want to or be asked to reflect on:

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| ●how to choose a subject for your dissertation? | * how to approach your dissertation? |
| ●what your essay title means | * how you are going to approach the essay |
| ●how well you wrote a piece of work | * how you prepared for a lecture |
| ●how you listened to a lecture | * how you undertook a reading assignment |
| ●how you performed in a recent examination | * how you contributed to some group work |
| ● how others reacted | * how you did in a practical situation |
| ●what experiences you gained in some part-time or voluntary work you did | |
| ●how you solved a particular problem | * how you can improve your study |

In your reflection, you could write about:

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| ●what you did and why you did it | * what was good and bad about it |
| ●why you found it good or bad | * what you found easy or difficult |
| ●why you found it easy or difficult | * what you liked about what you did |
| ●why you felt like that | * how you might want to follow it up |
| ●what other people did and why they did it | * how did you feel about what others did |
| ●how you used what you have been taught in class | * what other information do you need |
| ●what you are going to do differently in this type of situation next time | |
| ●what steps you are going to take on the basis of what you have learned | |
| ●what you are going to do next. | |

Reflective writing often involves an action plan in which you should write about:

- what you are going to do differently in this type of situation next time
- what steps you are going to take on the basis of what you have learned