

## Further reading

Atkins, S. and Murphy, K. (1994) 'Reflective Practice'. *Nursing Standard* 8 (39), 49-56

Atkinson, E. (2000) 'Behind the Inquiring Mind: Exploring the Transition from External to Internal Inquiry'. *Reflective Practice* 1 (2), 149-64

Bleakley, A. (2000) 'Writing with Invisible Ink: Narrative, Confessionalism and Reflective Practice'. *Reflective Practice* 1 (1), 11-24

Boud, D., Keogh, R., and Walker, D. (eds.) (1985) *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*. London: Kogan Page

Burchell, H. and Dyson, J. (2000) 'Just a Little Story: The Use of Stories to Aid Reflection on Teaching in Higher Education'. *Educational Action Research* 8 (3), 435-50

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

McGill, I. and Beaty, L. (1995) *Action Learning: A Guide for Professional, Management and Educational Development*. 2nd edn. London: Kogan Page

Moon, J. (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice*. Kogan Page, London

Watson, J. and Wilcox, S. (2000) 'Reading for Understanding: Methods of Reflecting on Practice'. *Reflective Practice* 1 (1), 25-42

## Reflective Writing

### What is reflective writing in an academic context?

Reflective writing assignments give you the opportunity to gain further insight from personal and professional experience. Reflective writing should, therefore, reflect movement back and forth between the objective and the subjective, the world and your perspective on it. In order to convey your conclusions, insights, and opinions, for most reflective writing assignments you may choose to use the first-person perspective or 'I' voice. But the most important aspect of engaging in reflective writing in an academic context is that you demonstrate a *changed conceptual perspective*.

### What is the role of theorising in reflective writing?

The process of preparing a piece of reflective writing should lead in this way to more than just an increase to your knowledge, as it should also deploy theoretical reading that challenges the concepts by which you make sense of this knowledge. When reflecting on an experience, you do not merely *see* more. Rather, you *see* differently. Theoretical reading helps you achieve this different way of seeing, which should be reflected in statements that communicate a commitment to action. Action represents the final stage of reflection (Atkins and Murphy 1994). Reflective writing helps you to translate the particular terms of an experience into the shared terms of a wider conclusion, then, that takes its initial cues from but does not dwell entirely on your personal and professional experience.

## Reflective writing draws on:

Your experience  
Your knowledge  
Your attitude  
Your perspective

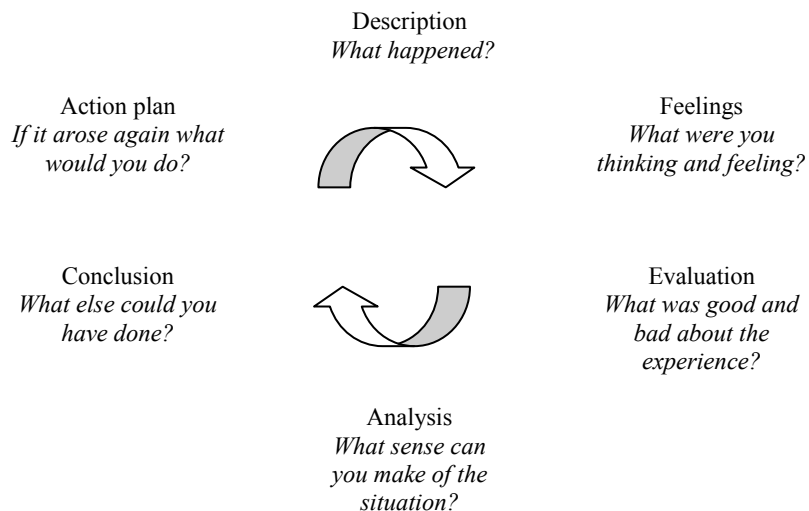
## You are the primary source

### Getting started

You may wish to consider these questions:

What experience do I want to discuss?  
How does this experience relate to my course of study?  
What have I read on this subject already?  
How can I use my experience to support my insights?  
What are the limits of my experience?  
How do these limits suggest opportunities for personal and professional growth through reflective writing?

## The Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988)



## Here is an example of a student's reflective writing

'During an internship that I held over the summer holiday, several tasks were divided between members of my team. However, these tasks were not immediately understood as similarly difficult by everyone. Our morale was at risk because of this perceived inequality. Social interdependence theory distinguishes between a type of group interaction called 'positive interdependence', a form of successful collaboration (Johnson and Johnson 1993, cited by Maughan and Webb 2001), and many studies have demonstrated that 'co-operative learning experiences encourage higher achievement' (Maughan and Webb 2001). In the end, our team did achieve a successful outcome. To improve the process, though, we could have used a chairperson to encourage cooperation as the tasks were being distributed. If it seems appropriate in future group work, I might suggest making this addition to the team'.

*This paragraph can be broken down into four basic components that should serve together as a conceptual starting point for drafting your own reflective paragraphs:*

### Description

'During an internship ...'

### Theoretically informed interpretation

'Social interdependence theory ...'

### Outcome

'In the end, our group did achieve ...'

### Action