

Reflection

What is 'reflection'?

Reflection is an invisible process that goes on inside our heads constantly. We **consciously** reflect when, for example:

- something significant has happened
- we have a decision to make
- we're working on something
- we're stuck
- we've just completed something
- we've been asked to do something
- we've encountered the unexpected or the unfamiliar
- our equilibrium has been disturbed
- we are encountering, anticipating or seeking change.

If this reflection is deep enough, it gives us lasting insights or knowledge—what we call experience, something we can call up subsequently to help guide our responses.

The basis of reflection is **inquiry-based problem-solving**. It requires curiosity, scrutiny and a quest for some sort of knowledge, insight or understanding.

Reflection plays an important role in the evaluation of what was learned and how it was learned. It provides the opportunity to:

- plan and track the learning process
- record discoveries
- make connections with prior learning.

The act of reflection:

- is a conscious search for meaning and of making meaning
- enables learners to distance themselves from their learning and to view it from the outside
- allows us to become aware of our cognitive frameworks.

Through reflection, we can develop an objective understanding of ourselves as learners.

Reflection is a key part of our personal development and identity. It gives us self-knowledge and a consciousness regard for who we are and our place in the world.

Our reflections, therefore, can become a complex map that not only directs us towards a destination but also charts all the routes we've already travelled, the places we've been to, the resources we've had and how we have used them.

Reflecting on our reflections—**secondary reflection**—allows us to distance ourselves from ourselves. This type of reflection enables us to understand ourselves better as people and as learners.

Do I need to document my reflections as I work through the Extended Essay?

Yes. You are expected to document your reflections in a '**Researcher's Reflection Space**'. (RRS)

The Researcher's reflection space is a personal learning environment that can be either a physical or virtual support tool. It is a space in which you record reflections on what you are reading, writing and thinking. It will help you to prepare for your reflection sessions with your supervisor and inform the discussions that take place. You could use your RRS to:

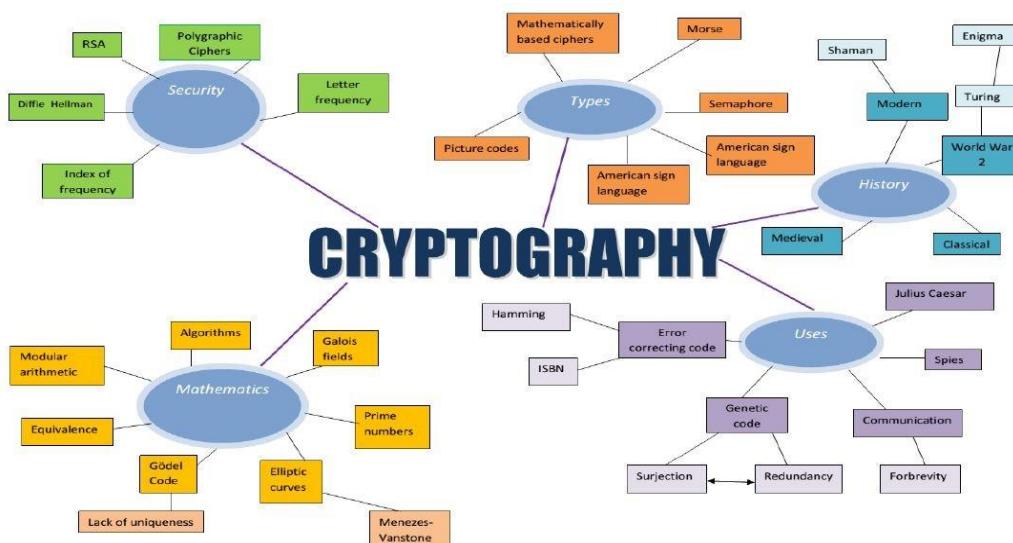
- record your reflections
- respond to artifacts, such as photos, newspaper clippings, Twitter feeds, blogs, and so on
- respond to prompts and questions that may arise in your subject areas, TOK classes or other aspects of the Diploma Programme
- create Mind Maps®;
- record emerging questions.
- remind yourself of tasks to be completed or questions to ask in your next meeting with your supervisor.
- record bibliographic details of the sources you are working from.

What might a Researcher's Reflection Space (RRS) look like?

The RRS can take any form which works for you. It's likely to be in written format, and might be a process journal, a blog, a workbook or a portfolio. There are three primary functions of an RRS:

1. **Study/cognitive**—focusing on ideas, research, evaluations, concepts, discoveries.
2. **Process/procedural**—focusing on problem-solving, inspirations, ideas, workings, processes, systems of exploration.
3. **Autobiographical/affective**—focusing on personal rants, raves, achievements, frustrations, discoveries, experiences, insights.

Below are some examples of what parts of your RRS might look like:



Are there different levels of reflection?

Reflection can be 'descriptive', analytical, and/or 'evaluative'. See the table below for examples of questions which you could ask yourself under these headings. **These levels of reflection link to the attainment levels for Criterion E: Engagement**

Level of reflection	Example of the kinds of questions students may have asked and answered of themselves
Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did I do?• How did I undertake my research?• What were the problems I faced?• Did my approach or strategies change throughout the process?• What have been the high and the low points of the research and writing process?
Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was my research successful?• If I changed my approach or strategies during the process, why did I do this?• What did I learn from the experience in terms of my understanding of the subject area and/or the skills needed to undertake research?• How has my understanding of the topic and research process developed throughout the task?
Evaluative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If I were to undertake this research again, would I do it differently—if so, why or why not?• What has affected this?• If I did do the research again, would I change the theories applied or the methodological approach? Would this have led to a different outcome?• What can I conclude from this?• Were the strategies I used for undertaking my research the most appropriate for achieving my outcomes?• What, if any, questions emerged as a result of my research that I was not expecting? Would these questions influence my approach if I were to undertake the research again?