Reflective Writing

What is reflective writing?

Reflective writing explores experiences/practice or concepts/theories in order to demonstrate learning and record how your thinking has changed.

Typically, reflective writing will include

- Description of an experience or concept
- Interpretation of the experience or concept and what this means for you
- Outcomes of learning and new thinking, and how you intend to apply your new thinking/learning

Reflective thinking frameworks

Reflective thinking frameworks help you to think and then write reflectively. Choose a framework and follow the steps to help you gain deeper insight as you reflect.

1. The Gibbs reflective cycle

Figure 1. Gibbs reflective cycle (from Gibbs. 1988, as cited in "Teaching Reflective Writing," n.d.)

2. Kolb's experiential learning cycle

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

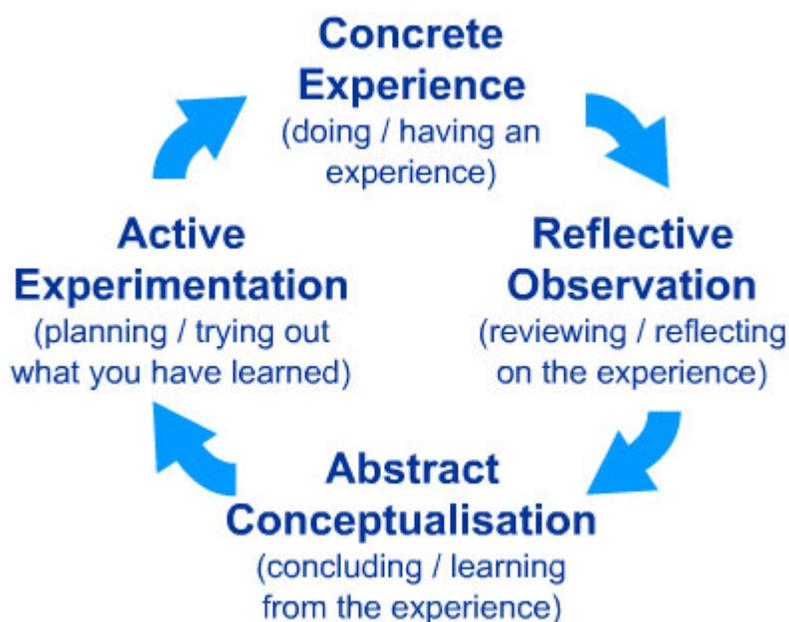*Figure 2.* Experiential learning cycle (from Kolb, 1984, as cited in McLeod, 2013)

3. Rolfe, Freshwater and Jaspers' reflective practice cycle

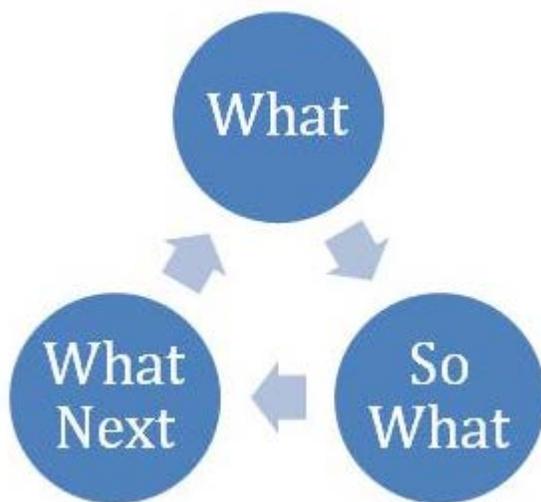**What**

So What

What Next

Figure 3. Reflective practice cycle (adapted from Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jaspers, 2001, as cited in "Models of Reflection," n.d.)

Use a framework

Use the questions below to help you think and then write reflectively.

Reflective Thinking Framework	Reflective Writing Framework
What happened? What did I do? What learning was I applying? What did others do?	Description (What?)
What did I notice? What was important for me? What were my thoughts /feelings? What did/did not go well, and why? What other learning or experience/practice can I relate to this? What has changed in me because of this experience?	Interpretation (So what?)
How can I do things differently? What do I now understand and how will this impact in my work/life? What questions do I now have that I will explore further? What changes to my practice do I intend to make?	Outcomes (What next?)

Reflective writing style

Reflective writing is personal writing in an academic environment. Note the following style aspects:

Essential: • Correct grammar • Correct spelling • Structured and logical • Meaningful titles and subject lines (for online forums)	**Acceptable:** • Use of "I"
Recommended: Ideas supported with references (this will be essential if your reflection is an assignment task)	**Not acceptable in online forums:** • Negative attitudes • Slang • Foul language • Emotional outbursts • SHOUTING • Sarcasm • "Me-tooing" without adding to forum discussions

Reflective Writing Sentence Structures

Construct a sentence by selecting words from each column within each section. For example:
For me, the most meaningful element was . . .

Description: What?			
State what, where, who, and when, as appropriate to your situation.			

Interpretation: So what?			
For me, the (most)	important significant relevant meaningful useful successful	aspect element idea component experience learning	was / were . . . resulted from . . . happened when . . .
At first, initially, Previously, Although, Later, Consequently		thought (did not think) . . . noticed (did not notice) . . . realised (did not realise) . . . considered (did not consider) . . . wondered (did not wonder) . . . felt (did not feel) . . .	
This	might be . . . could be . . . is perhaps . . . is most likely to be . . . is probably . . . is important . . . is not . . .	because . . . due to . . . explained to . . . related to . . .	
This	reminds me of . . . relates to . . . is similar to . . . is unlike . . . demonstrates . . . illustrates . . . convinces me . . .		
I	felt . . . noticed . . . discovered . . . realised . . . found . . . learned . . . am unsure about . . . wonder . . .		

Outcomes: What next?			
Having	read . . . experienced . . . applied . . . discussed . . . examined . . . analysed . . . considered . . .	I now	feel . . . think . . . believe . . . question . . . know . . . wonder . . . will . . .
I have / have not	learned . . . developed . . . improved . . . adapted . . . modified . . . adjusted . . .	my	skills in . . . understanding of . . . beliefs around . . . knowledge of . . . ability to . . .
This means that . . . This makes me feel . . .			
This	is could be will be	essential to me . . . important to me . . . useful . . .	because . . .
As a next step, I need to . . . Next, I will / will not . . . In future, I will / will not . . . If . . . then I . . . I would like to. . . I suggest . . .			

Adapted from Hampton (n.d.)

References

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