

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.

Figure 1

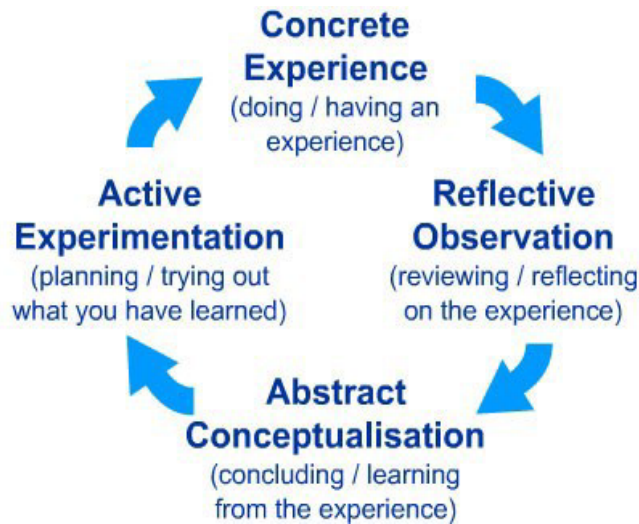
Gibbs Reflective Cycle



Note. From *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*, by G. Gibbs, 1988. Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Figure 2

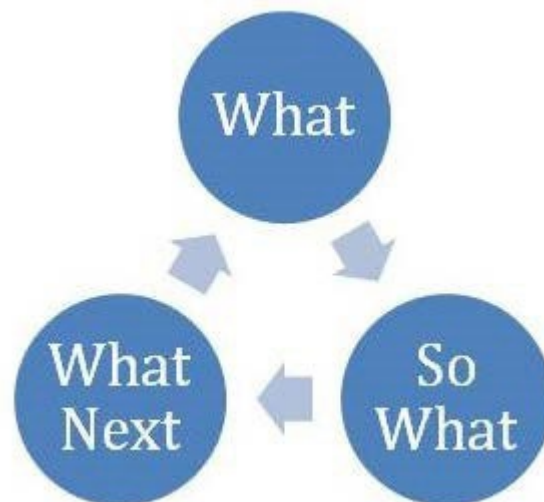
Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Note. From *Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle*, by D. Kolb, 1984, as cited in S. McLeod, 2013. Simply Psychology (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>).

Figure 3

Rolfe, Freshwater and Jaspers' Reflective Practice Cycle



Note. From *Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide*, by G. Rolfe, D. Freshwater, & M. Jaspers, 2001. Palgrave Macmillan.

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:

<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct grammar • Correct spelling • Structured and logical • Meaningful titles and subject lines (for online forums) 	<p>Acceptable:</p> <p>Use of “I”</p>
<p>Recommended:</p> <p>Ideas supported with references (this will be essential if your reflection is an assignment task)</p>	<p>Not acceptable in online forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitudes • Slang • Foul language • Emotional outbursts • SHOUTING • Sarcasm • “Me-tooing” without adding to forum discussions

Reflective Writing Sentence Starters

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 Rolfe et al., 2001)

References

McLeod, S. (2013). *Kolb: Learning styles*. Simply Psychology.

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/learningkolb.html>

Roberts, C. (n.d.). *Using reflective writing in your teaching: A workshop for STEM disciplines*. The Higher Education Academy.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/hea_guide_-_using_reflective_writing_in_your_teaching.pdf

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jaspers, M. (2001). *Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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