### ideas for reflective writing

<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>aim:</strong></th>
<th>These two pages aim to provide the student with the type of questions asked in reflective writing and provide a template design that can be used or adapted.</th>
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| **why this approach might be helpful for students:** | Students are often asked to reflect on experiences or events and many find good reflective writing difficult to produce. Often, much of what is written is descriptive and not reflective. 

The questions presented in the documents below will help generate some ideas for reflection and for useful reflective writing. 

The first document presents an idea for a reflective writing template (for example, when producing a reflective journal). It can be copied or adapted. The headings and order can be retained if appropriate. 

The second document presents similar questions in a different format. Initially, in producing reflective writing, ideas are more important than the order in which they will be presented. Use these questions to generate ideas. Not all the questions will be appropriate so choose the ones that give the most interesting and relevant answers. |
| **note:** | These questions can also be used when applying a reflective model (such as Gibbs) to an assignment. 

In reflective writing, it is better to keep description to a minimum. 

Reflective writing is a personal reaction to an experience. It is therefore written in the first person (I learnt...I discovered...) and is usually less formal than most academic writing. 

Reflective writing may or may not require references to other sources (such as a policy document or subject-specific literature). Check with your tutor first. |
**Template idea for personal or reflective writing or journal entries**

**Summary of what was done, seen etc... (Don’t describe everything, be selective)**
(include date, time and place if appropriate)

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**New Learning**
What did I learn that was new to me?
What insights did this new knowledge give to me?  
   - did it help me see something in a new light?  
   - did it help me understand something that I didn’t understand before?
How do I think this might be useful (in my work practice, in my studies, in my life)?

**Personal Reaction**
How did I feel about what was done?  
   - Did it affect me emotionally and if so how?
What did I like or enjoy and why?
What did I dislike and why?
What did I find easy to do or understand and why?
What did I find difficult or challenging to do or understand and why?

**Action to be Taken**
Is there any action that I will take as a result of what was done?
Do I need to plug further gaps in my knowledge?
Do I want to investigate or research further?

**The keys to good reflective writing are:**

**Reflect Early**
Write your thoughts down soon after the activity or piece of work you are reflecting on – don’t wait a long time and try to catch up later or rely on memory.

**Be Specific, Not General**
Try to give as many specific examples as possible. These examples should show your personal reaction or experience. Instead of writing vague, general statements such as ‘...this web site will improve my communication skills’, be more specific: ‘...knowledge of this website means that when I present my work on River Management next Thursday, I will be able to access and present the detailed statistics from the Defra Management Board. This will increase the validity and reliability of my data and strengthen my argument.’.

**Show the Value of Reflection**
By reflection, you should emphasise the link between what you did and learnt and its usefulness in your specific area of study or work. Explain, with examples how it will help you in your work and in understanding ideas. In other words show the practical and theoretical value of seeing or doing something.
THE KEYS TO GOOD REFLECTIVE WRITING ARE:

- Reflect early
- Be specific, not general
- Show the value of reflection

A summary or brief description of what is being considered for reflection
(for example: an event, an activity, an experience etc)

**PERSONAL REACTION**
- Did I have any emotional response? (what?)
- What did I enjoy and why?
- What did I dislike and why?

**PROBLEMS**
- What did I find difficult or challenging (why?)
- What were the main problems and how did I deal with them?

**ACTION**
- Do I need to change? (how?)
- Do I need to plug gaps in my knowledge? (what, how?)
- Would I do things differently in the future? (how?)

**NEW LEARNING**
- What did I learn that was new?
- Did this new learning change the way I do (practice) or think? (how?)

**PERSONAL REACTION**
- Did I have any emotional response? (what?)
- What did I enjoy and why?
- What did I dislike and why?

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