

What is Reflective Writing?

Reflective writing is a way to help others get to know you. It usually involves writing a personal response to your learning, life events, experiences, or circumstances.

Reflective writing is a useful skill for...

- Cover letters for jobs.
- Classroom assignments.
- Applications and internships.
- And more!

Reflection is not...

- A summary of course notes.
- Just information or descriptions of events and experiences.
- A simple decision about whether something is good or bad, right or wrong.

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How do I start?

Begin by examining the prompt or the question you're responding to.

Here's an example prompt for a personal essay or job application:

"Describe a major challenge that **you have had to face** and **the steps you took** to overcome the challenge. **How** has that experience made you a better person, student, or employee?"

In a reflective writing prompt, certain phrases will tell you to provide a personal response. Here, the phrases are bolded because they ask for a description about what has changed for you or what you've learned.

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Questions to think about

First, think of times in your life when you've faced challenges.

Once you have decided which challenge you would like to talk about in your paper, you have some important questions to think about:

- What did I learn?
- How did my views change?
- Is this important to me? Why?
- Did anything surprise me? Why?

You can also use Gibb's Reflective Cycle on the next page to uncover additional details for your essay.

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Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

is a tool for revisiting your experiences, examining your thoughts and actions, and describing what you've learned.



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Planning Your Essay

Once you have reflected on the experience or information requested by the prompt, you can start to create sentences for your essay!

Reflection, like any skill, gets easier with practice. However, using particular reflective phrases can help emphasize the significance of your experiences, what you learned, and how you plan on using that knowledge moving forward!

The following sections provide some examples of how you might build reflective phrases in the introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs of your essay.

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Reflective Introduction

Your introduction is a chance to share a key idea and something about yourself. Use the following example sentences to organize and express your ideas:

Before _____, I had never _____. =

“Before my internship, I had never worked in an office.”

_____ provided me with valuable experiences in _____. =

“Volunteering provided me with valuable experiences in administrative work.”

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Reflective Body Paragraphs

Your body paragraphs elaborate on the ideas you bring up in your introduction:

I have + improved + my ability to ____ =

"I have improved my ability to communicate."

Having learned ____, I now realize ____ =

"Having learned how to organize files, I now realize I enjoy it."

I developed my knowledge of ____ =

"I have developed my knowledge of how an office runs."

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Reflective Conclusion

Your conclusion is a chance to sum up your reflective essay:

Now that I have completed _____,
I have new _____ skills.

“Now that I have completed my
summer internship, I have new office
skills.”

I am grateful for _____, and for my
experiences in _____. =

“I am grateful for my internship at the
animal shelter and for my experiences
in an office setting.”

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