



Reflective tasks

What is reflection used for?

Reflective tasks are used to develop critical thinking skills by asking you to write reflectively on:

- readings
- current knowledge
- experiences
- work placements

Reflective tasks require you to examine your subjective thoughts and feelings as well as your responses to new information and new experiences in order to:

- identify learning needs and improve your learning processes
- make connections between theory and professional practice
- identify what you understand and any questions you have

What types of reflective tasks are there?

Reflective tasks come in various forms including:

- reflective journals
- blogs and wikis
- e-portfolios

However, a reflective task may also be included as one section of a larger assignment with a particular set of instructions.

Writing the reflective task

The planning for reflective writing is the critical thinking on a particular topic, event or learning process and the writing is how you demonstrate these thoughts.

1. Analyse the task and confirm what type of reflection you are required to write

Always carefully review the assignment you have been given to ensure you are following the task instructions. What exactly are you being asked to reflect on? Is it your experience from a situation, your own learning process, observations you have made etc.?



2. Analyse and evaluate the learning situation or knowledge

Depending on the task you have been given, you will need to evaluate and analyse a particular situation, idea (knowledge), experience, event, process etc. and to consider what was important or significant and why.

3. Use prompting questions to help you write reflectively

The [Reflective practice cycle](#) (*opens in a new window*) provides you with some questions for you to ask and answer in order to help you reflect deeply about the task.

4. Include the characteristics of reflective tasks in your writing

There are some particular characteristics of reflective writing which may differ from the other types of academic writing you have done previously. Important characteristics include:

- a. **Using first person:** Reflective writing is often written in the **first person** (using 'I') because you are writing about your own experiences and thoughts.
- b. **Using tenses:** When writing reflectively you will need to move between the past tense and the present tense.

Use **past tense** when you are describing an event that took place.

*The supervisor **was** quick to point out where I had gone wrong.*

Use **present tense** when you are making a general comment or referring to the theory.

*My job **involves** managing customers' money effectively and profitably.*

*Brownlow's theory can be applied in this case because it **deals** with people's feelings.*

- c. **Using speculative language:** When writing in reflective tasks you will often need to speculate about the future or about a hypothetical situation. For instance you may want to comment on a particular workplace and how suitable it would be for your future career. Notice how present and past tenses are used with speculative language in the example below.

*Although I **enjoyed** my placement at Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC), I **would** not like to work there in the future. The reasons for this are first that I **prefer** to live in rural areas as I grew up in Port Pirie. Most jobs with PwC are in the city and I **am hoping** to find a position in the country when I graduate. Secondly PwC specialises in mining, utilities and defence industries. I **would prefer** not to work for any of these industries as I believe they exploit the environment and the interests of people who are less powerful in our society.*

- d. **Connecting theory to practice:** While it is important to record feelings and emotions as they can indicate areas where you may need to make changes or develop better strategies,



you should go beyond simply recording the feeling. Try to make connections between events and theory or attempt to understand the context and see the event from different perspectives.

Original text: *When the supervisor raised her voice and reprimanded me for arriving late I felt very embarrassed. It reminded me of the importance of punctuality so I will try not to be late in future.*

Revised version: *When the supervisor raised her voice and reprimanded me for arriving late I felt very embarrassed. While on the one hand I realise that I had contravened an explicit workplace rule, I still believe she could have spoken to me in private and without raising her voice. I have since looked up some texts on workplace communication (reference) and they say it is always important to consider the context before jumping to conclusions about behaviour. This led me to understanding that the supervisor was under some stress as the organisation was undergoing a major review from Canberra at the time. I still think she could have been more controlled and this experience has taught me the importance of thinking about the feelings others in the workplace.*