



Examples of Reflective Writing

Types of reflective writing assignments

Journal: requires you to write weekly entries throughout a semester. May require you to base your reflection on course content.

Learning diary: similar to a journal, but may require group participation. The diary then becomes a place for you to communicate in writing with other group members.

Log book: often used in disciplines based on experimental work, such as science. You note down or 'log' what you have done. A log gives you an accurate record of a process and helps you reflect on past actions and make better decisions for future actions.

Reflective note: often used in law. A reflective note encourages you to think about your personal reaction to a legal issue raised in a course.

Essay diary: can take the form of an annotated bibliography (where you examine sources of evidence you might include in your essay) and a critique (where you reflect on your own writing and research processes).

Peer review: usually involves students showing their work to their peers for feedback.

Self-assessment: requires you to comment on your own work.

Some examples of reflective writing

Social Science fieldwork report (methods section)

<p>The field notes were written by hand on lined paper. They consisted of jotted notes and mental triggers (personal notes that would remind me of specific things when it came to writing the notes up). I took some direct observational notes recording what I saw where this was relevant to the research questions and, as I was aiming to get a sense of the culture and working environment, I also made researcher inference notes [1] [2] .</p> <p>[3] I found the notetaking process itself helpful, as it ensured that I listened carefully and decoded information. Not all the information I recorded was relevant, but noting what I found informative contributed to my ability to form an overview on re-reading. However, the reliability of jotted notes alone can be questionable. For example, the notes were not a direct transcription of what the subjects said but consisted of pertinent or interesting information.</p> <p>Rarely did I have time to transcribe a direct quotation, so relied on my own fairly rapid paraphrasing, which risks changing the meaning. Some technical information was difficult to note down accurately [3] . A tape recorder would have been a better, more accurate method. However, one student brought a tape recorder and was asked to switch it off by a participant who was uneasy about her comments being directly recorded. It seems that subjects feel differently about being recorded or photographed (as opposed to observers taking notes), so specific consent should be sought before using these technologies [4] .</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Description/ explanation of method. 2. Includes discipline-specific language 3. Critical evaluation of method 4. Conclusion and recommendation based on the writer's experience
---	---

Engineering Design Report

<p>Question: Discuss at least two things you learnt or discovered – for example about design, or working in groups or the physical world – through participating in the Impromptu Design activities.</p> <p>Firstly, the most obvious thing that I discovered was the advantage of working as part of a group [1] . I learned that good teamwork is the key to success in design activities when time and resources are limited. As everyone had their own point of view, many different ideas could be produced and I found the energy of group participation made me feel more energetic about contributing something [2] .</p> <p>Secondly I discovered that even the simplest things on earth could be turned into something amazing if we put enough creativity and effort into working on them [1] . With the Impromptu Design activities [3] we used some simple materials such as straws, string, and balloons, but were still able to create some 'cool stuff' [4] . I learned that every design has its weaknesses and strengths and working with a group can help discover what they are. We challenged each other's preconceptions about what would and would not work. We could also see the reality of the way changing a design actually affected its performance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addresses the assignment question 2. Reflects on direct experiences 3. Direct reference to the course activity 4. The style is relatively informal, yet still uses full sentences. 5. Relating what was learnt.
---	--

Learning Journal (weekly reflection)

Last week's lecture presented the idea that science is the most powerful form of evidence [1]. My position as a student studying both physics and law makes this an important issue for me [2] and one I was thinking about while watching the 'The New Inventors' television program last Tuesday [3]. The two 'inventors' (an odd name considering that, as Smith (2002) says, nobody thinks of things in a vacuum) were accompanied by their marketing people. The conversations were quite contrived, but also funny and enlightening. I realised that the marketing people used a certain form of evidence to persuade the viewers (us?) of the value of the inventions [4]. To them, this value was determined solely by whether something could be bought or sold—in other words, whether something was 'marketable'. In contrast, the inventors seemed quite shy and reluctant to use anything more than technical language, almost as if this was the only evidence required – as if no further explanation was needed.

This difference forced me to reflect on the aims of this course—how communication skills are not generic, but differ according to time and place. Like in the 'Research Methodology' textbook discussed in the first lecture, these communication skills are the result of a form of triangulation, [5] which I have made into the following diagram:

...

1. Description of topic encountered in the course
2. The author's voice is clear
3. Introduces 'everyday' life experience
4. The style is relatively informal, yet still uses full sentences
5. Makes an explicit link between 'everyday' life and the topic

References

Brookfield, S 1987, *Developing critical thinkers: challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting* Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Mezirow, J 1990, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Schön, DA 1987, *Educating the reflective practitioner*, Jossey-Bass. San Francisco.

The Learning Centre thanks the students who permitted us to feature examples of their writing.

Prepared by The Learning Centre, The University of New South Wales © 2019. This guide may be distributed or adapted for educational purposes. Full and proper acknowledgement is required. Contact us here: learningcentre@unsw.edu.au

Want more help?



Learning Centre

For all your referencing, writing and academic skills support



Education Support Advisors

Talk to one of our Advisors about healthy study habits



NavigateMe

Want to improve your grades? Try NavigateMe

Examples of Reflective Writing

Document Version Date 14/03/2019

UNSW CRICOS Provider Code: 00098G

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/examples-reflective-writing>