

APSU Writing Center
Reflective Essays

Reflective Essay

What is a reflective essay?

- A reflective essay is a way to look back on or “reflect on” what you learned from a particular text, event, or experience. This allows the writer to develop critical thinking and self-awareness.

What a reflective essay is not:

- A reflective essay is not a simple summary of events or experiences or a straightforward narrative. It is also not a simple decision about whether something is good or bad, right or wrong.

Before you write:

- Consider your own personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, impacts it had on you, and how you can grow from this experience.
- **Ask yourself:** What was the specific experience or event I am reflecting on? How did I feel during the experience? What were the main challenges or difficulties I faced? What did I learn from this experience? In what ways has this experience influenced my future actions or decisions? What new insights have I gained about myself?

Style and Tone

- Ensure your reflective essay's style and tone match the assignment's objectives, emphasizing personal exploration and insights using first-person pronouns.
- While citations are primarily for specific text references, personal experiences serve as the main evidence. Verify citation preferences with your instructor if needed.

Writing the Reflection:

- Remember that reflective essays aim to deepen your understanding of a specific assignment or experience, so your thoughts, feelings, and insights are crucial.
- **Describe:** prepare a detailed account of the experience.
 - What was the text, event, or experience? What happened during the experience? Where and when did it occur? Who was involved? What was my role in the experience?
- **Interpret:** analyze the significance of the experience and its impact on you.
 - How did the text, event, or experience meet my expectations (or not)? What questions did it raise for me? What specific aspects of the experience were particularly meaningful or challenging?
- **Evaluate:** assess the positive and negative aspects of the experience and its overall impact.
 - What did I learn from this text, event, or experience? What went well, and what didn't go well? How did this experience affect my understanding or perspective?
- **Plan:** outline how you will apply what you learned in future situations.
 - How will I use what I learned during this text, event, or experience in the future? What goals do I have moving forward based on this reflection? What actions will I take to improve or build on this experience?
- **Conclusion:** summarize the key points of your reflective essay.



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References

Cleveland State University Writing Center. (n.d.). *Reflection Papers*. Retrieved from <https://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/reflection-papers>

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