

WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice is a term given to a form of learning in which you keep a record of your progress through a period of study, a placement, a performance or project. On completion, you may be required to write a reflective piece in the form of an essay or report.

Keeping a Reflective Journal

The quality of the contents of this journal will influence the richness and sincerity of the final piece. It may also be separately marked, so it is important to express yourself well and include sources you have researched to support your statements.

Students often find it difficult to write anything useful or concrete in their daily or weekly journal entries or blogs. The quality of your entries, to a large extent, depends on your reading around your study and other research elements. For example, if you are preparing for a performance, have you researched sources that will enhance the development of your assignment? Was there a programme on the television that exemplified the techniques you plan to use? Make sure you do the necessary research outside the lectures and seminars.

Start with an initial statement which explains the extent of your understanding of this subject. This is where you are now. When you write your final piece, you can look back at this statement and assess how far you have travelled, i.e. the changes you have undergone during the process.

Set yourself some standard questions to answer:

What have you learned today that will impact on your understanding of this subject?

How might you choose to do things differently or think about things differently?

What skills/needs are coming to light? How will you meet these skills/needs?

Why have you chosen to take this particular route in your project/performance?

How do you hope it will improve/enrich your understanding?

What challenges has your workplacement presented you with?

How do you plan to tackle these?

Answer the relevant questions and, where possible, include quotations from sources as well as examples from your study.

HOW TO STRUCTURE A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

1	INTRODUCTION	
	<i>Statement of intent</i>	This is your claim. It may take 2 or 3 sentences to present. You may want to make a statement about how you feel your understanding of this subject/project/performance has developed. Remember the notes you wrote down at the beginning of the study. How has your perception changed?
	<i>Context</i>	Is your context pre-set by the tutor or did you have to choose a particular example/aspect/element of your subject. If this was your choice, how pertinent was this choice to your development?
	<i>Justification</i>	This is where you justify your choice of the context and/or reinforce your claim.
	<i>Signposting</i>	Set out the plan for the Main Body of your essay.
2	MAIN BODY	Before planning this part of the essay, overview your “study journey”. What have been the key milestones? Remain objective. This is about your learning, understanding and skills development. Break it down into 3 or 4 sections. Each section should address theoretical concepts and provide examples/evidence to support these from your study/project/performance. It may be appropriate to present sections in a chronological order but do not feel tied into writing this way. Summarise for each section and make sure each section links to the next.
3	CONCLUSION	Return to your claim and consider all the summaries from your Main Body. What overarching statement can you now make about this “study journey”? How would you evaluate the process? Stay objective.
	REFERENCES	Listed in alphabetical order according to author/website. List here only references you have used in your essay.
	APPENDICES	Only items that cannot be practically included in your essay. Label appendices and ensure everything included is mentioned somewhere in your essay.