

Reflective Writing

Reflective writing may take the form of a personal essay, a reading response, or a journal entry. The purpose of reflective writing is to look back on an experience and determine its meaning or significance in light of course material and readings. Reflective writing is usually done in order to understand why we feel a certain way about a subject; it can be a useful tool to reflect on what we have learned and understand how it all fits together. Your goal should be to let your readers share in this process of discovery, not necessarily to inform, complain, or reveal your deepest secrets.

Writing a Reflective Essay

- In reflective essays, the focus is inward-looking; personal thoughts, feelings, and findings should be included.
- Reflective essays follow the same basic structure as most other essays in that they have an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion.
- The following points should be considered when writing a reflective essay:
 - Introduction
 - Introduce the subject matter (this could be an assigned reading or a course concept)
 - Identify your feeling and initial responses to the material
 - Body
 - Describe how your experiences relate to the material and vice versa
 - Don't just say *what* you found interesting, but explain *why* you found it so
 - Include the reasons why you came away feeling the way you did
 - Conclusion
 - What did you learn from the material?
 - How does it apply to your own life?

Helpful Tips

- ☑ **Do incorporate your personal feelings into the essay.** The purpose of the essay is to find out how your own thoughts and feelings helped shape the message you took away from the course material and/or reading.
- ☑ **Do use the first person.** Writing a reflective essay is different than writing a formal persuasive or informative essay. Your professor is interested in finding out what YOU have to say about the material. Using "I felt," "I found," and "I realized" are all appropriate in a reflective piece.
- ☑ **Do make the connection between course material and your own experience.** This is the key in a reflective essay. Your professor is looking for the ways in which you relate to the material, and how this compares to other's experiences.
- ☑ **Do structure your essay clearly.** In a reflective essay, you should include a thesis statement and organize your thoughts logically.
- ☑ **Don't go on a rant.** While it is fair to suggest ways that the material may have been more relevant, it is not appropriate to spend the entire essay complaining about your experience.
- ☑ **Don't worry about being wrong.** While reflective essays are graded, there is no right or wrong answer. Your professor is more likely to appreciate the honesty and thought put into the paper, rather than reading what you think he or she wanted you to write.