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# Reflective essay using Gibb's Reflective Cycle

## Introduction

Reflecting on my own experiences has helped me learn and grown in many ways. I have used Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988) as a guide to think about what went well, and what did not, and how I can do better next time. At the beginning of my course, I had many problems because I did not know much about using computers. Anderson and Bell (2020) state that "students without strong digital literacy skills often struggle with basic tasks such as using Word processing software and conducting effective online research" (p. 50). I also found it difficult to think critically about my readings and manage my time. However, as time went on, I worked hard to overcome these problems. A major turning point was when I had to prepare and deliver a practice presentation on a chosen subject (Michael Jackson). That presentation went well, and it showed me that with effort, I could improve my digital skills, learn to think better, and manage my time wisely. Eduards (2021) explains that "developing digital competence is linked to greater confidence in academic settings" (p.128). In this essay, I argue that digital literacy, the ability to think critically, and strong time management are not only important for my studies but also for life beyond school. Fisher and Green (2022) highlight that "educational technology should prepare students for life beyond school" (p. 88).

## Description

At the start of the course, I felt lost when it came to using computers. I did not know how to format documents or use the features in common software. Even simple tasks took me much longer than they should have, and I often had to ask for help. This made me feel like I was holding my group members back during projects, and I worried that I might fell the course if I couldn't catch up. Eduards (2021) found that "students with digital competence tend to have better academic performance" (p. 120). One of my biggest challenges was using academic databases to find credible sources. I would often rely on basic search engines instead of scholarly databases because I was unfamiliar with how they worked. This made research time-consuming and less effective. Kelly (2020) states that "students who lack research skills often struggle to differentiate between reliable and unreliable online information" (p. 30). Because of this my early assignments lacked depth, as I sometimes used sources that were not the most credible or relevant. Another issue was formatting assignments correctly. I struggled with structuring my essays, inserting citations properly, and ensuring that my documents met the required academic standards. This was frustrating because I would spend hours trying to correct small mistakes. Michelle (2021) notes that "mastering digital tools for academic writing is essential for producing well-structured and professional work" (p. 55). My lack of these skills made me feel overwhelmed, and I often had to redo parts of my work multiple times. Despite these struggles I gradually learned to adapt. I started watching online tutorials, practising different software, and complete some courses through Moodle.

## Feelings

I was very overwhelmed and a bit embarrassed by my lack of computer knowledge. Brown and Davis (2021) note that "students often feel as if they are falling behind when they compare themselves to peers who work more quickly" (p. 315). I was also frustrated because even simple tasks seemed hard and very time-consuming. This made me start doubting myself and felling like I wasn't smart enough to keep up. I also felt uncertain about my academic work. My struggles with critical thinking made me feel like I was not engaging with the material as deeply as I should. Harris (2022) states that "students who only skim the surface of their reading materials risk missing out on important ideas" (p.135). Despite all this challenges, I began to feel more determined over time. When I worked on a practice presentation at my chosen subject (Michael Jackson) I felt a spark of hope because I realised that by putting in

extra effort, I could get better at using digital tools and managing my time. When the presentation turned out well, I felt proud and much more confident in my abilities.

## Evaluation

Looking back, there were both good and not-so-good parts of my experience. On the bride side, my early struggles with computers pushed me to learn more. I began to look for help, read online tutorials, and practice using the programs that I needed for my assignments. Michelle (2021) argues that" hands on learning helps students gain practical skills that they will use beyond university" (p. 55).

The Michael Jackson presentation was a clear sign that I had grown. I managed to use the digital tools correctly, my slides were clear and engaging, and I felt comfortable presenting my ideas. Peterson (2023) states that "students who actively practice their presentation and digital skills develop greater confidence in academic settings" (p. 60). However, my initial difficulty with critical thinking and time management held me back for a while. I often ended up just summarising information instead of analysing, which meant that my work was not as deep or original as it could have been. O'Connor (2022) points out that "without proper analysis, students risk producing work that lacks originality and depth" (p. 145).

My poor time management also made my studies more stressful than necessary, as I often felt rushed and anxious when deadlines approached. Davis and Evans (2020) emphasize that "effective time management skills can significantly reduce academic stress and improve performance" (p. 70).

## Analysis

One big reason was that I had not been exposed to computers much before starting the course. Anderson and Bell (2020) explain that "many students enter higher education without much training in digital tools, which makes even simple assignments seems difficult" (p. 47).

My struggles with critical thinking were also linked to my previous study habits. I was used to reading passively and taking things at face value rather than questioning or exploring ideas further. Carter (2022) states that "students who actively engage with their studies material tend to develop better analytical and reasoning skills" (p. 92).

Time management was another challenge. I did not have a clear plan for how to use my time, which led to unnecessary stress. Lewis (2022) and Davis & Evans (2020) highlighted that “breaking work into smaller, manageable parts can make a big difference in productivity” (p. 99). Once I started planning my tasks better, I found that I could work more steadily and with less anxiety.

## Conclusion

After looking back at my experiences, I now see that my early struggles were important learning opportunities. My initial lack of computer knowledge, difficulty with critical thinking, and poor time management make the start of the course hard, but they also motivated me to improve. Johnson & Lee (2023) argue that “students who actively work on their weaknesses develop greater education. Similarly, critical thinking and good time management are essential tools that helps us make sense of the world and manage our daily tasks (Kelly, 2020). Looking back, I can see how much I have learned and improve, but I also recognise that there is still a lot to work on and I will continue to refine these skills by actively seeking learning opportunities and applying what I have learn to my studies.

## Action plan

To keep improving, I have created a structured plan with clear goals:

Enhancing Digital Skills:

I plan to join online courses and workshops that focus on basic digital skills. Johnson and Lee (2023) state that “learning how to use research databases and academic software helps students feel more confident in their studies” (p.65)

Developing Critical Thinking:

Carter (2020) and Harris (2022) emphasize that critical thinking requires active engagement with material, including questioning ideas and forming personal opinions. Instead of just summarising texts, I will ask more questions, write down my thoughts, and discuss toppings with classmates to improve my analytical skills.

Improving Time Management:

Lewis (2022) explain that structured time management reduces stress and increases productivity. To stay on track, I will use a planner to break assignments into smaller tasks with deadlines. I will also apply the Pomodoro method, which involves working in short, focussed sessions with breaks.

Reflecting on my progress:

I will continue to use Gibb's Reflective Cycle after each major assignment. According to Michelle et al, reflecting on what went well and what did not will help me learn from my experiences and keep improving.

Ask for feedback:

I plan to ask my teachers and classmates for feedback on my work. Their suggestions will help me see things from a different perspective and improve my academic performance (O'Connor, 2022; Peterson, 2023).

Practising meditation:

Smith et al. (2021) found that practising short, mindfulness exercises can reduce stress and improve focus. To stay calm and improve concentration, I will incorporate brief meditation sessions into my study routine.

## SMART Action Plan

**SPECIFIC**

Learn more about computer:

I will enrol in an online course focused on digital literacy, including tools like Microsoft Office and academic research databases.

Digital literacy:

I will improve my digital literacy by completing three online tutorials on academic research skills, including how to use Google Schoolar, library databases, and reference management tools like Zotero or Mendeley.

Time management:

I will adopt a time management tool (such as Google Calendar or Todoist) and create a daily schedule to organise my tasks.

Stress management:

I will practice mindfulness meditation for at less 10 minutes a day to reduce stress and improve focus.

**MEASURABLE**

Learn more about computer:

I will complete each module of the course and earn a certificate of completion.

Digital literacy:

I will track my progress by completing quizzes or exercises provided in the tutorials and applying these skills in at least two academic assignments.

Time management:

I will set daily and weekly goals and track my progress using a planner or app.

Stress Management:

I will track my meditation sessions using a journal or a meditation app.

**ACHIEVABLE**

Learn more about computer:

I will dedicate two hours per week to the course and practice the new skills.

Digital literacy:

I will dedicate one hour per week each course and practice the new skills.

Time management:

I will spend 15 minutes each day planning my tasks and review my schedule every Sunday.

Stress management:

I will incorporate meditation into my daily routine by practising before study session or at the end of the day.

**RELEVANT**

Learn more about computer:

This action plan will improve my digital skills, which are essential for my academic and personal success.

Digital literacy:

Developing strong digital literacy skills will enhance my ability to conduct academic research efficiently, find credible sources, and properly reference my work, which are essential for success in higher education.

Time management:

Effective time management will reduce stress and improve my productivity in academic work.

Stress management:

Reducing stress through meditation will help me improve my focus, time management, and overall academic performance.

**TIME-BOUND**

Learn more about computer:

I aim to complete the course within the next eight weeks.

Digital literacy:

I will complete all three tutorials within the next six weeks and apply the skills in two academic assignments by the end of the term.

Time management:

I will implement this strategy immediately and review my progress after four weeks.

Stress management:

I will fallow this routine consistently for the next eight weeks and evaluate its effectiveness afterward.

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