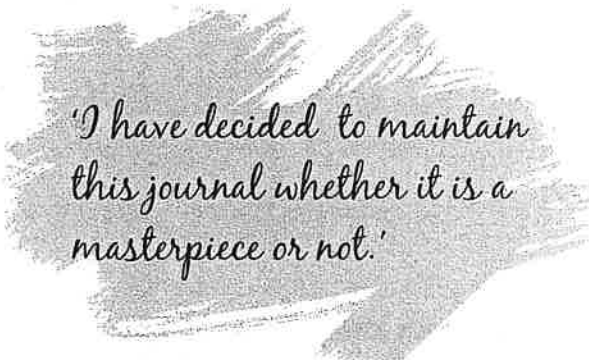


When you have not done it before, writing a reflective journal for the first time can be difficult and many people do not know where to start. Often they ask questions such as:

- What am I meant to write?
- Where do I start?
- What if I get it all wrong?
- What if I write things that make no sense?

These are natural questions to ask, and you can gain some confidence and re-assurance from Bolton's (2010: 107–18) practical advice on starting to write as part of your professional development. In her work she describes five stages of reflective writing – she calls Stage 1 'the six minute write'. Here she gives the following pointers:

- Write whatever is in your head
- Time yourself and write for six minutes without stopping
- Don't stop to examine your writing or to be critical of it; just keep writing even if it doesn't seem to make sense
- Let your writing flow; don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar and so on
- Give yourself permission to write anything
- Remember, whatever you write cannot be wrong – it's yours and no-one else needs to read it.



*'I have decided to maintain this journal whether it is a masterpiece or not.'*

Bolton suggests other forms of writing in the subsequent four stages. Stage 2 involves thinking of an experience you have had and writing about it as if you are telling a story. In Stage 3, you can then read the story (and the six minutes of writing) and respond to it. In Stage 4, she suggests sharing what you have written with someone else – this needs to be someone you know well and trust (see Theme 5.2 on critical friendship). In Stage 5, she suggests you could begin to develop your work by writing from someone else's perspective – for example, from the client's point of view.