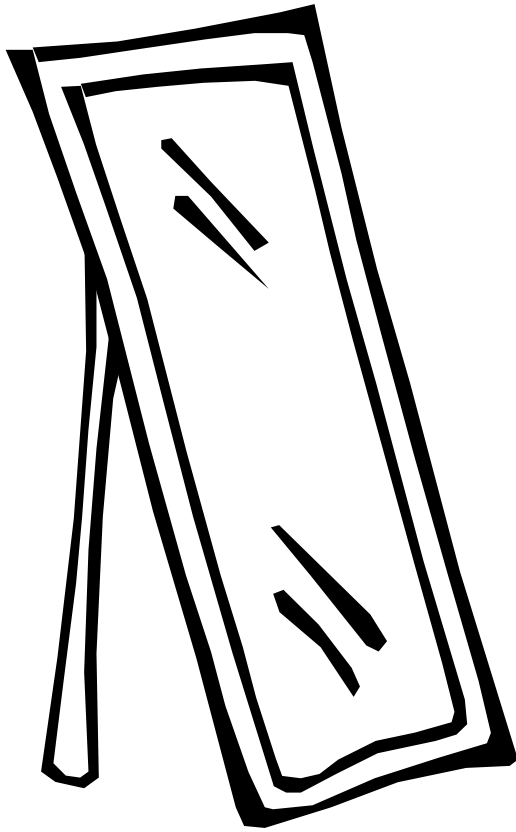


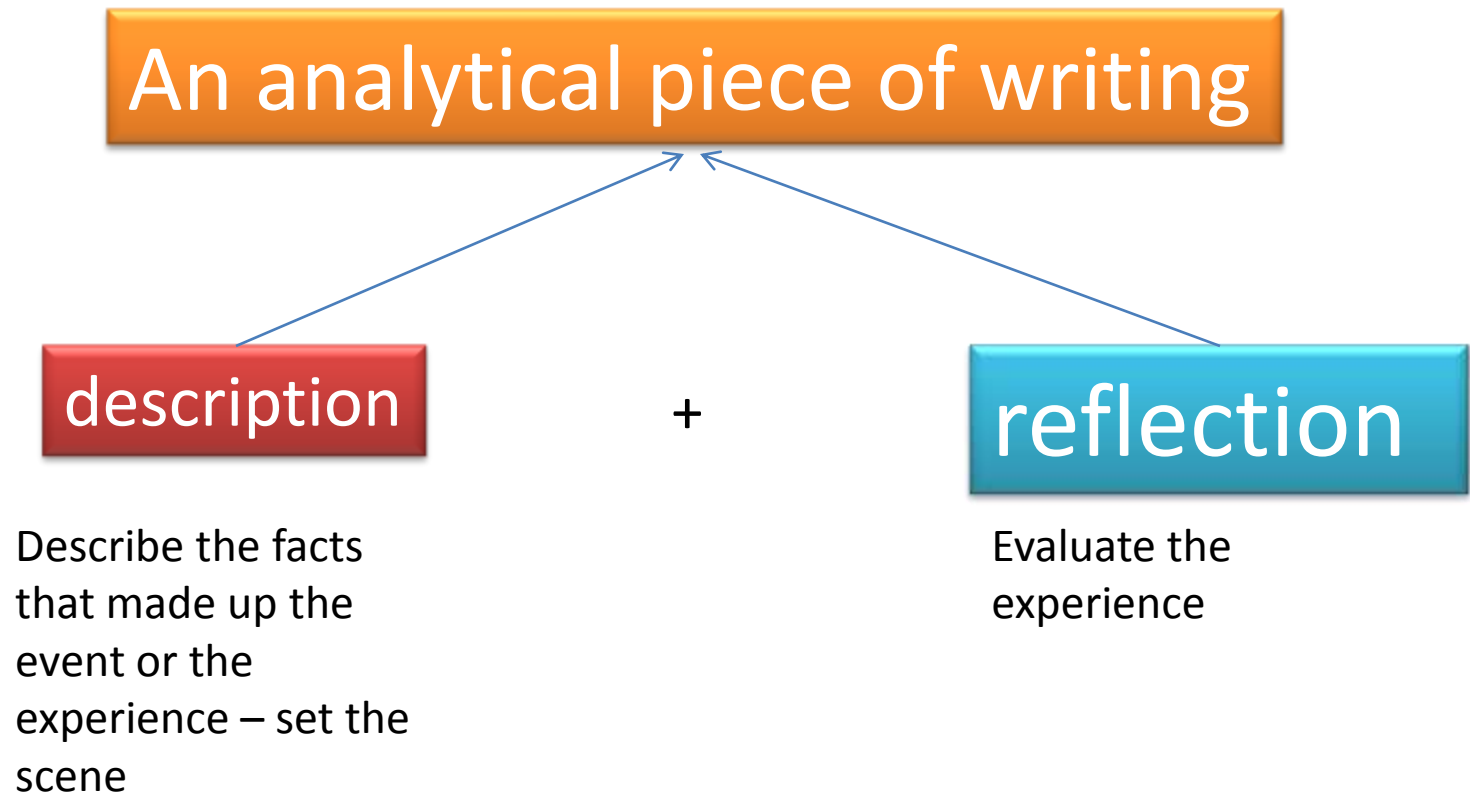


How to write
a reflective
essay

Learning outcomes

1. Plan a reflective essay appropriately
2. Identify an effective way of writing the introduction
3. Recognise the structure of body paragraphs to support the introduction
4. Produce an effective conclusion
5. Identify the style of a reflective essay

What is a reflective essay?



Description vs Reflection

Past experience	Description	Reflection
A student nurse on a recent clinical placement	The physical environment where he was (the ward, the beds, the patients, the MDT), who he talked to, what he did or what he was told to do	How he felt at the time, what he learnt from the experience, what he discovered he did not know, what perceptions did he have before placement, did the experience confirm or challenge it, what he plans to do about his needs, skills he needs to develop or acquire

Steps to consider in structuring the essay

1. Examine the essay question
2. Read the marking criteria
3. Identify the event or experience in which you will reflect
4. Ensure you maintain anonymity & confidentiality of patients and institutions involved
5. Find answers to what, where, when, who, how, why to set the scene
6. Note the main issues you have been able to identify in relation to the experience
7. Think of ways you can relate these main issues to the literature (sources)
8. Jot down further notes to demonstrate your understanding and insights gained (compare and contrast, cause and effect etc)
9. Relate your insights to literature
10. Make notes as to how you will make the connection between theory and practice clear
11. Note down how you will discuss your personal and professional learning needs

Introduction

Tell the reader

1. What the essay is about
2. What exactly the essay focuses on
3. Why it is important to analyse this
4. How it will be developed
(definitions, reflective model)

Reflection and the body of the essay

1. Description of the event/experience and your feelings at the time
2. Evaluation of the event/experience (what was good or bad about it)
3. Analysis of the event/experience (cause and effect, compare and contrast)

WHAT

(returning to the situation)

(using Driscoll's model)

WHAT

(returning to the situation)

1. is the purpose of returning to this situation?
2. exactly occurred in your words?
3. did you see? did you do?
4. was your reaction?
5. did other people do? eg.
colleague, patient, visitor
6. do you see as key aspects of this situation?

SO WHAT

(understanding the context)

1. were your feelings at the time?
2. are your feelings now? are there any differences? why?
3. were the effects of what you did (or did not do)?
4. “good” emerged from the situation, eg. for self/others?
troubles you, if anything?
5. were your experiences in comparison to your colleagues, etc?
6. are the main reasons for feeling differently from your colleagues etc?

NOW WHAT

(modifying future outcomes)

Now what

1. are the implications for you, your colleagues, the patient etc.?
2. needs to happen to alter the situation?
3. are you going to do about the situation?
4. happens if you decide not to alter anything?
5. might you do differently if faced with a similar situation again?
6. information do you need to face a similar situation again?
7. are your best ways of getting further information about the situation should it arise again?

Conclusion

1. Provide a summary of the issues explored
2. Remind the reader of the purpose of the essay
3. Suggest an appropriate course of action in relation to the needs identified in the body of the essay