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Academic Skills - Report

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Task 3: Reflective Report Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Introduction

In my reflective report, I will present Strategies for Overcoming Writing Block and use Gibbs' reflective cycle to demonstrate the processes and steps students can take to support them when they encounter difficulties. When I discovered the Academic Writing module, I was very pleased because it helped me understand how to develop academic writing skills and the steps to achieve them. I also learned what to avoid and what to use. I found that this module significantly improved my understanding and writing skills for the academic environment I currently find myself in. I want to demonstrate my current knowledge and strengths to help other students who also face writing blocks. I will also share my personal experience applying the methods that helped me improve my writing skills.

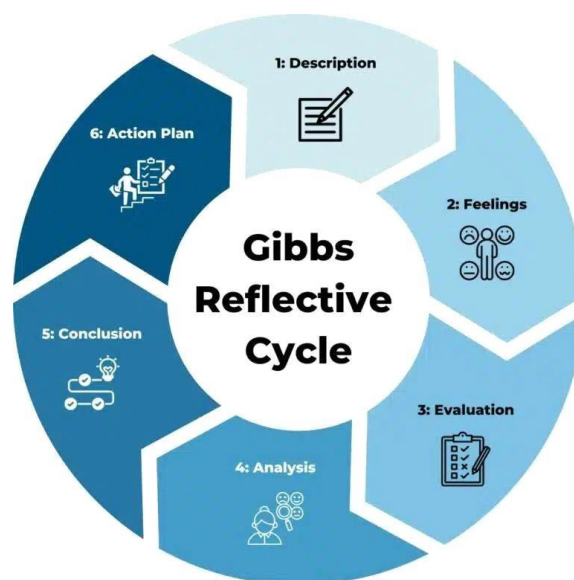


Figure 1. Gibbs Reflective Cycle Source: (Channell, 2023)

Academic Writing

Description

Academic writing is used by students, researchers, and educators. Following this logic, it is adopted in academic publications and articles. Through its main characteristics and "measures", academic writing is designed to communicate ideas clearly, for example, presenting topics of high or moderate complexity clearly, so that this knowledge can be better shared with other colleagues (Castillo-Martínez and Ramírez-Montoya, 2021).

Identify Your Struggle in the Academic Writing Process

What is your plan, organization, and structure for your academic texts? What challenges do you face in developing ideas clearly and coherently? What strategies do you use to overcome your writing blocks?

Feelings

When I began my essay, report, dissertation, or other work, I realized that academic writing is different from other forms of writing I was used to. From the tone of the language to the structure and form. As I took my tests to learn to write within these "standards," I realized that academic writing requires planning and attention. To improve it, I needed to analyze three essential traits of academic writing.

Evidence Based - Arguments

The first step is to prioritize texts with clear, evidence-based arguments, rather than relying solely on personal opinions or unsubstantiated assertions (Teng and Yue, 2023). Focus on reliable sources, data, and research that others can verify. You can include evidence from articles, books, surveys, and official reports. You should verify or refute the research, thus developing a strong, evidence-based argument.

Formal and Objective Tone

Academic writing is formal; avoid the informal use of slang, colloquialisms, and emotional expression is avoided. Writing in the third person is expected, rather than the first. Personal pronouns should be avoided (Nguyen et al., 2024). Write in a neutral, narrative style, being objective from beginning to end. When a person uses an objective and formal style in their academic writing, they are meeting the demands of the academic environment, and this is essential for effectively communicating their ideas and research results (Yu, 2021). This minimizes the risk of misinterpretation and also ensures that the study can be reapplied and reused by others, as long as the language is clear and precise.

Proper Citations and References

You should support any type of evidence or claims with appropriate references, as they are one of the most significant features of academic writing. By doing so, you will be giving credit to the original authors of the research you chose to base your work on. This will allow

readers to check or explore your sources in more detail; it will also prevent future accusations of plagiarism, as your writing will be transparent (Amirjalili et al., 2024). Citation methods vary according to your style guide. Traditional style guides include APA, Chicago Manual of Style, and MLA, and this guide will address their use cases later. Maintaining academic integrity is the goal of all style guides.

Evaluation

After incorporating and practicing these steps into my academic writing journey, I saw a significant improvement in my writing development at university, and I've also seen this same personal growth in the corporate environments I frequent. I also learned that the main types of academic writing may be divided into subcategories, such as analytical, descriptive, critical, or persuasive. Each subcategory has a different purpose and requires different choices of style and language.

Analysis

This experience showed me the value of organizing my studies and carefully exploring the proper use of these instructional tools, which are designed to provide guidance. In the following section, I will present the research I carried out that provided me with theoretical support. Descriptive writing delivers information and communicates ideas, clarifying concepts or processes to readers without necessarily offering an interpretation (Amirjalili et al., 2024). Persuasive writing aims to influence readers, encouraging them to adopt a particular viewpoint or take a specific action. Similar to descriptive writing, it relies on facts and information, but it advances further by presenting a well-structured argument to defend a position. Analytical writing examines and tests evidence, comparing different perspectives to develop a reasoned conclusion (Fang, 2021). Finally, critical writing combines persuasive and analytical methods to assess and investigate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple arguments, while also questioning the reliability and validity of theories.

Conclusion

By following these steps and mastering my writing skills, I've achieved personal and professional success. I now know how to position myself better, how to use a proper referencing scheme to emphasize an argument, and how to restate my ideas (without plagiarism). I've found that using these methods has become essential for my research and studies. I feel satisfied and confident that I will have

Action Plan

I will definitely continue to improve my studies to become even better. I will schedule specific times for study and research and keep a list of my favorite databases. This will help me organize and optimize my time. By using my time more efficiently, I will avoid unnecessary stress in my research/reports and ensure organization and more time to access my favorite content, including academic writing.

Academic Writing Skills

Description

As Hacker and Sommers (2021) mentioned, clarity is key: “A strong thesis statement is clear, specific, and arguable. It tells the reader exactly what you will discuss and defines the boundaries of your paper.”. I find that representing these ideas in my own work has been enriching. In summary, a strong thesis statement should be:

- Focused – I had enough time to develop it throughout the paper. I didn't get carried away with detailed explanations or arguments.
- Concise – I kept my thesis statement short, which is common, usually one or two sentences.
- Consistent – Every point made in my thesis statement was supported and explained in my paper.

My thesis statement provided an organized overview of my argument and positioning. At first, I struggled because I was always stressed about unintentional plagiarism. It's a challenge to accurately convey the original meanings without repeating them. This initially caused me anxiety, but with practice, my confidence grew. I came to value the step-by-step task as a way to enrich my knowledge of the topic and put it into practice. It was an enriching learning experience.

Hacker, D., and Sommers, N. (2021). *A Writer's Reference with 2021 MLA Update*. Macmillan Higher Education.

Feelings

At first, I had a lot of difficulty with academic writing because I always felt anxious, not knowing where to start or the best way to study, and I didn't know how to make plans and prepare for it. I wanted to have clarity in my projects and a strong, clear, specific, and debatable thesis. On several occasions, I was afraid of plagiarising when I found an interesting academic reference that I wanted to use as the basis for my work. The challenge of conveying the original meanings well without repeating myself was constant. However, with practice, my confidence grew. I came to appreciate academic writing and all the study it involves as a means of enriching my knowledge of the subject.

Assessment

The feedback I received during the writing exercises was helpful. I learned that I should not be afraid to express myself, both in writing and in the classroom. At home, practising my writing, I had successful attempts and areas that needed improvement. I realised that I should pay more attention to retaining important information in longer texts (Fang, 2021). Sometimes, inevitably, I couldn't help feeling insecure when working with longer texts with many topics, but continuous effort helped me improve my skills in this area.

Analysis

Academic writing needs to have a solid, meaningful structure. This will provide key insights and show connections between different points. I'll mention the standard structure first: academic essays, for example, typically follow a section-by-section structure. College-level academic papers often require a more robust structure to accommodate complex arguments and in-depth analysis! But don't limit yourself to a simple five-paragraph essay; let's consider the following expanded structure:

1. Introduction: Provide relevant context to guide an argument or research. Clearly present your thesis or main argument, shaping the focus of the article. Briefly preview the structure of the essay to guide the reader through the relevant points (Kumar, 2023).

2. Body Paragraphs: These options are independent of the depth and complexity of the topic. It's important to note that three body paragraphs is a harmful limit. It's also important to avoid artificially restricting yourself to three paragraphs (Kumar, 2023). This limits your ability to fully explore the argument.

Conclusion

I learned to write academically, learned to paraphrase, and clearly observed and improved my writing and reading comprehension skills. I understand paraphrasing as another very important skill for interpreting complex ideas. I engaged in the process, which helped me observe everything more critically and carefully. This has become a useful technique in my academic toolkit.

Action Plan

I will practice exercises to develop my academic writing, reviewing all the guidelines necessary to consistently produce exemplary work. I will also seek feedback to refine my skills. I will also read various materials on the subject, improving my ability to reformulate complex concepts effectively.

Referencing Skills

Description

Referencing is important in any academic text to establish credibility and acknowledge sources (Cutri et al., 2021). I was exposed for the first time to the Harvard referencing style, which I was able to practice on several occasions. This exercise helped me understand how proper citation supports arguments and maintains academic integrity in academic work.

Feelings

I used to think referencing was tedious because there were so many rules and regulations associated with it; so I was afraid of making a mistake that could render my entire work unreliable. But after a while, I got into the habit and realized the importance of referencing for structuring an argument and also for respecting intellectual property in academic writing.

Analysis

This made me understand the importance of being careful when citing. Maintaining an adequate number of references and updating the list frequently helped avoid last-minute mistakes. Making this a habit reduced my errors and demonstrated the importance of preparing a structured reference list from the beginning of my research.

Conclusion

Developing referencing skills has improved both the quality of my writing and my academic credibility. I now realize that following a proper citation system strengthens an argument and values the contributions of other authors, which is essential for future work and for maintaining professional and reliable writing.

Action Plan

I intend to consult the Harvard Style Guide frequently and use citation tools to ensure accuracy. With continued practice, I will expand my knowledge, and maintaining an organized reference list throughout my research will ensure consistency and clarity in citations in subsequent papers.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my learning in research, paraphrasing, and referencing, I realize my ability to adapt is constant. These skills are differentiators that enhance my academic career, allowing me to produce with greater confidence and efficiency. I have made progress, but there is still room for improvement (Schillings et al., 2023). I intend to apply the action plans I created to overcome challenges and build an increasingly effective method of producing papers, becoming a more confident and prepared student.

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