

Reflective Writing

“It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalizations or concepts can be generated”
(Gibbs, 1988, p. 9).

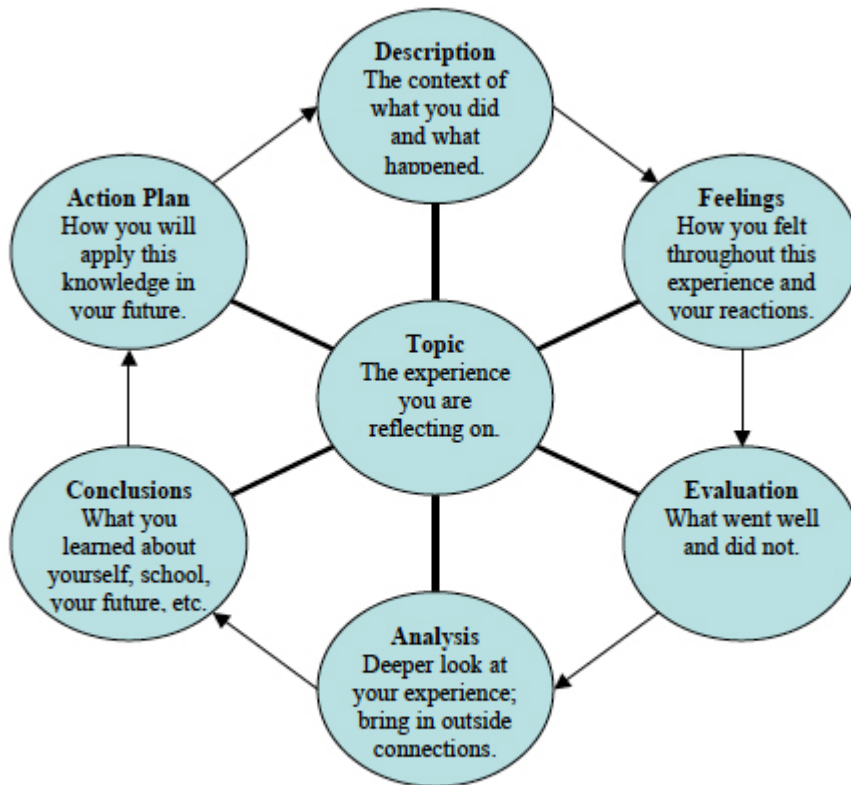
Reflective writing gives you the chance to think about what you are doing more deeply and to learn from your experience. It helps you make connections between what you are taught in theory and what you need to do in practice.

In reflective writing, first you write down the thoughts and feelings that you experienced while carrying out a particular activity. These activities can include writing an essay, viewing a film, volunteering, taking a class, or reading an article. Then you write to make sense of the experience, enabling you to grow in your understanding and to plan for the future.

Graham Gibbs (1988) suggests the following stages to encourage deeper reflection:

- **Description:** This is the context of the event. What happened? What are you going to reflect on? Who was there? Why were you there?
- **Feelings:** This is self-awareness. How did you feel? How did the others around you feel? What were your reactions? How did you feel outcome of the event?
- **Evaluation:** Consider your judgments. What was good or bad about the experience? What went well and not so well?
- **Analysis:** What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you. What was really going on?
- **Conclusions (general):** This is the synthesis. What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?
- **Conclusions (specific):** What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or ways of working? How will/did this affect you personally?
- **Personal Action Plans:** What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learned?

Visual Representation: Reflective Writing



Developed by Madelynn Hoard, Antioch University - Seattle

References

Gillet, Andy. (2010). *Genres in academic writing: Reflective writing*. Retrieved from <http://www.uefap.com/writing/genre/reflect.html>

Gibbs, Graham. (1988). *Model of reflection [PDF document]*. Retrieved from www.afpp.org.uk/filegrab/Gibbsmodelofreflection.pdf?ref=46