

Day 2

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HEALTHCARE ASSISTANTS' APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME:

ACADEMIC SKILLS – DESCRIPTIVE VS REFLECTIVE WRITING

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

- Used to set the scene and contextualise the problem/topic. Answers the “what?”, “when?” and “who?” type questions.
- EG what is this about? What is the context? When does it occur? Who is involved / affected / interested? etc.
- You’re not developing an argument, you’re merely setting the background; it’s fact-based
- You’re representing the situation as it stands without presenting any analysis or discussion
- You’re not taking the ideas forward in any way
- You’re using up valuable words from your word count!
- You’re writing in the third person (eg he, she, they, the author)
- You’re not incorporating your opinion or critique of the text

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- **WHAT**
 - **WHERE**
 - **WHO**
 - **WHEN**

REFLECTIVE WRITING

- Adding personal experience and learning
- Focuses on future improvements
- Answers the “what if?” and “what next?” questions.
- Writing in the first person (eg I)

- EG What if this or that factor were added/altered/removed? What needs doing now?

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- **WHAT IF?**
 - **WHAT NEXT?**

REFLECTIVE WRITING - DEFINITION

“Writing reflectively involves **critically analysing an experience**, recording **how it has impacted you** and what you plan to **do with your new knowledge**. It can help you to reflect on a deeper level as the act of getting something down on paper often helps people to think an experience through.

The key to reflective writing is to be analytical rather than descriptive. Always **ask why** rather than just describing what happened during an experience.”

From University of Cambridge (no date) Study Skills: Reflective Practice Toolkit. Available at: <https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/reflectivepracticetoolkit/reflectivewriting> (Accessed 18/06/23)



REFLECTIVE WRITING: WHAT IS IT?



looks back at past experience to perform better in the future

analyses, explores and explains what happened and why

usually incorporates models or theory

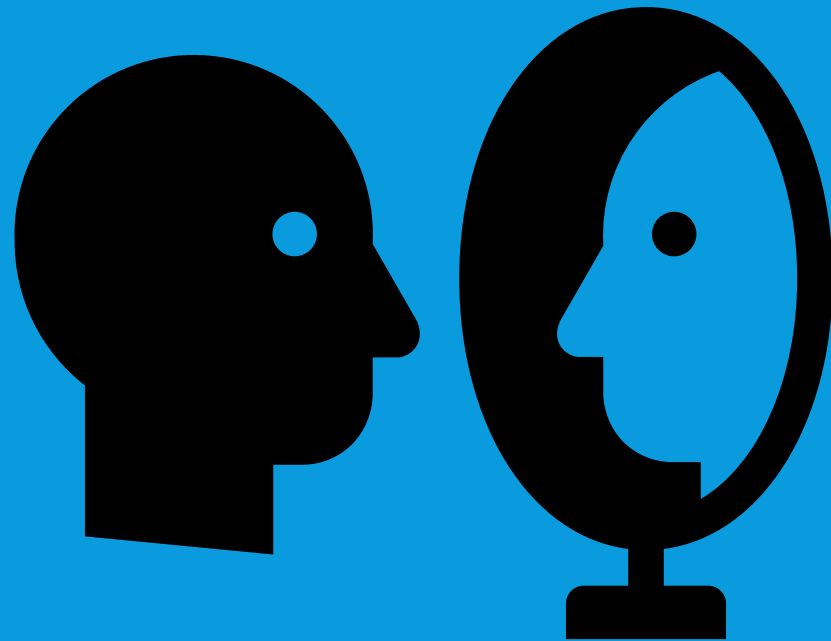
uses academic language

considers strengths, weaknesses, anxieties and errors — you can use personal language such as 'I' and 'we' to talk about observations, emotions and feelings

is constructively criticising yourself, an event and others

requires evidence to support what you are saying such as things that have been said or done, their causes and their effects — so you need clear records of the events and your thoughts

REFLECTIVE WRITING STRUCTURE



Reflection usually has the following major components:

- 1. Introduction:** the event, incident or topic
- 2. Description** and problematisation of the event
- 3. Cause and effect** of the critical event — don't write too much description at this stage
- 4. Explain and critique** what happened, what are you trying to resolve here, what you have learnt and how you would move forwards

REFLECTIVE WRITING EXAMPLE

This example of reflective writing from the University of Portsmouth can be split into three parts:

- *description (tends to be short – explains what happened and what's being examined)*
- *interpretation (can include what is most important, interesting, useful or relevant about the event/idea etc . Can include how it can be explained such as with a theory)*
- *outcome (covers what you've learnt from your experience and what it means for your future)*

Specific tasks were shared out amongst members of my team. However, the tasks were not seen as equally difficult by all team members. Consequently, the perception of unfairness impacted on our interactions. Social interdependence theory recognises a type of group interaction called “positive interdependence” (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, cited by Maughan & Webb, 2010) and many studies demonstrate that learning can be improved through cooperation (Maughan & Webb, 2010). We did not experience these with the initial task allocation. Nonetheless, we achieved a successful outcome through further negotiation. Therefore, we found that “cooperative learning experiences encourage higher achievement.” (Maughan & Webb, 2010). To improve the process in future, perhaps we could elect a chairperson to help encourage cooperation when tasks are being allocated.

USEFUL REFLECTIVE VOCABULARY



relevant

may be explained by

additionally

alternatively

significant

meaningful

I now feel

wonder

is related to

experiences

having read

element

subsequently

In a future similar situation, I would

I do not yet understand

indicates

may be seen as

suggests

questioned

believe

Always try and write in the first person ('I', 'me', 'we' and 'us') when writing reflectively. This will help you to focus on your thoughts/ feelings/ experiences rather than just being a description of the experience...

REFLECTIVE WRITING – EXCELLENT VIDEO



- Reflective writing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoI67VeE3ds>

REFLECTIVE WRITING - EXAMPLE



EXAMPLE REFLECTIVE ESSAY FOR

Critical Thinking and Writing for Nursing Students

Bob Price and Anne Harrington

This example of a reflective essay is presented in association with Price, B and Harrington, A (2013) Critical Thinking and Writing for Nursing Students, London, Learning Matters. Readers are introduced to the process of critical and reflective thinking and the translation of these into coursework that will help them to achieve better grades in nursing courses. Stewart, Raymet, Fatima and Gina are four students who share their learning journey throughout the chapters of the book. In this essay on the assessment of pain, Raymet demonstrates her reflective writing skills near the end of her course. Raymet had by this stage written several reflective practice essays and gained good marks. This time though she was encouraged to deepen her reflections, speculating selectively on how the account of pain experienced by a patient (Mrs Drew) might help her to work more creatively with patient perceptions and reported needs.

N.B. Remember, copying essays such as this, submitting them as a whole or in part for assessment purposes, without attributing the source of the material, may leave you open to the charge of plagiarism. Significant sanctions may follow for nurses who do this, including referral to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Assessing Mrs Drew's Pain

Mc Caffery and Pasero (1999) state that pain is what the patient says it is. If we accept that point, then nurses need to explore the patient's perceptions of pain, as well as their report of experiences. The two are not quite the same. Patients may report their pain in a variety of ways, dependent on the nature and the intensity of pain and the context in which it is felt (e.g. whether they are ever distracted from the pain). Their perception of pain is a little more though and it includes the meaning that the pain has for them. It includes explanation of why the pain is there in the first place, what it indicates about their body and what it could suggest might happen in the future (getting better, getting worse). The nurse assesses the account of pain shared by the patient, and this may be given in the form of a story. This is how it began, this is how it felt, this is what that meant to me and this is what I did about it (Mishler et al. 2006)

In this essay I explore the assessment of pain as conducted with one 60 year old patient whom I will call Mrs Drew. Whilst the essay describes an assessment of pain with a single patient, I try to share too some ideas and questions that this provokes within me about pain assessment more generally.

Notes are offered on the essay, allowing you to identify the key features of the work...

https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/54814_Example_reflective_essay.pdf

REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

The *What, So What, Now What?* Model

What?

- What was the experience?
- What happened?
- What did you do?
- Who else was involved?

So what?

- What is the significance?
- How did you feel?
- Why did you react in this way?
- What influenced your feelings and reactions (e.g. past situations)?

Now what?

- What have you learnt from the experience?
- What would you do differently next time?

Based on Borton (1970) and Driscoll (2007)

Write some notes about a recent experience you've had when you feel you learnt a lot. Can you use the model introduced in Andrew's session last week to develop this into a short reflection?

REFLECTIVE WRITING EXAMPLE



Example:

- Dan is training to be a nurse in elderly care and wants to reflect on the experiences he is gaining on his placement. Dan decides to use the questions in Driscoll's model to help him to begin to analyse what he is learning.

Step 1 – What?

- Today I was observing an experienced community nurse change a dressing on a man's leg that is badly infected. The man was nervous and became very distressed – he has had dressings replaced regularly and knows that the process is very painful. I felt awful about causing him more pain. The community nurse seemed very calm and spoke to him in a reassuring way. She asked him if he would like some pain relief and he said yes. She sat with him for ten minutes to make sure that the pain relief was working and spoke with him about his grandson's visit that he was looking forward to at the weekend. This definitely seemed to put him at ease.

Step 2 – So what?

- She made it all look so easy. How would I cope if I had to do this? As a nurse I am meant to relieve pain not cause it. She focused on the patient while I focused on myself.

Step 3 – Now what?

- I learned a lot from the community nurse. She was very caring but firm. She knew the man's dressing needed to be changed but did everything in a very calm and kind way. She distracted him and helped him to relax. These are all strategies that I can try in the future if I have to do this. Nursing isn't only about my clinical skills; my interpersonal skills are vital, as is compassion and understanding for my patients.

Example taken from <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub/introduction-to-reflection/reflective-writing-examples-exercises>

REFERENCES

- University of Portsmouth (2023) *Reflective writing introduction*. Available at: <https://www.port.ac.uk/student-life/help-and-advice/study-skills/written-assignments/reflective-writing-introduction> (Accessed 18/06/23)
- University of Cambridge (no date) *Study Skills: Reflective Practice Toolkit*. Available at: <https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/reflectivepracticetoolkit/reflectivewriting> (Accessed 18/06/23)
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