



WRITING A CRITICAL REFLECTION

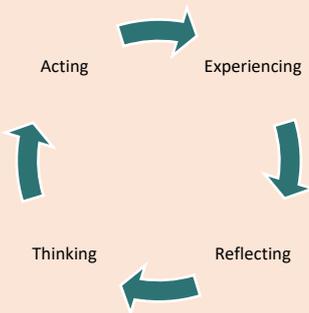


Figure 1 The experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2018)

Critical reflection is underpinned by the idea that we learn from our experiences. It is used in most disciplines as a technique to uncover and evaluate our deep responses to an activity and how this learning informs our future actions.

A critical reflection is often written in the form of a formal essay, blog, journal entry or short answer responses. Whatever the format, the process of critical reflection is the same. Essentially you are being asked to:

- reflect on an experience,
- evaluate its learning value now, in the present and,
- re-create for future actions.

This requires you to think about your beliefs and perceptions, feelings and reactions in relation to a situation you have experienced.

There are 3 steps to the critical reflection process

1. Analyse the experience

2. Evaluate your learning

3. Plan future action

How much detail you are expected to provide depends on the assessment guidelines - please consult these and check with your lecturer.

1. Analyse the experience

Identify and describe the event/activity/observation. This could be an observation of practice, a simulated event, or your participation in an activity. Use question starters to help focus the description:

- What (is the purpose, was happening, is the context)
- Who (was involved)
- When (did this happen)
- Where (did this happen i.e. environment)
- How (did the event unfold, did you react - feelings, emotions, thoughts and actions – positive or negative, comfortable, uncomfortable)
- Why (is it significant or valuable)

2. Evaluate your learning

Interpret the experience from different perspectives – your own personal lens, theoretical perspectives, models and frameworks from your course work, ethical and practice considerations.

- Is this experience new?
- How does it relate to past experiences? What was the outcome then? And now?
- How is this experience explained by a theory, model or framework you are familiar with?
- Were there any ethical or practice issues?
- What have you learnt about yourself?



Related resources:
Analysing the question

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3. Plan future action

Identify the implications that these reflections have on your understanding, thoughts, beliefs and perspectives and how these inform future actions and responses to your practice. Essentially:

- What can and will you do differently?
- Why is it important?
- Outline the specific steps for future action

Features of critical reflective writing:

- An analysis of your personal learning journey following the 3 steps of the critical reflection process - what happened, what have you learnt and what will you do differently as a result of your learning?
- The focus of writing is on your personal responses and reflections and less on the description of what happened.
- It is a personal piece of writing, often written in the first person

Top tips:

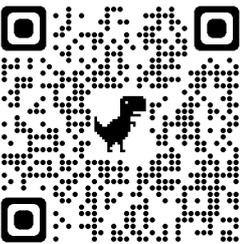
Check the assignment for specific requirements. Look for instructions that indicate word length, informal or formal writing, personal or third person writing, and the criteria to be covered by your critical reflection.

The reflection is about you and your responses. Be cautious in the way you identify others and ensure their confidentiality.

A well-structured paragraph is an effective way to convey information. It can be used for both informal and formal writing. Try **TEEL**:

- **Topic sentence.** Concisely outline 1 key idea or key point
- **Explanation.** Explain what you mean by this
- **Evidence.** Support the explanation with evidence and/or example
- **Linking sentence.** Summarise the paragraph/conclude the point/link to the following paragraph or connect to the purpose of your writing

Keep a journal for thoughts, responses and ideas particularly after an event, activity or practice observation. This helps with recalling the experience and reactions and can form the basis of your critical reflection.



Scan this QR Code to [watch a 2 minute video \(https://youtu.be/Rj80Q_6xykg\)](https://youtu.be/Rj80Q_6xykg) about critical reflection.

Reference:

Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2018). Eight important things to know about the experiential learning cycle. *Australian Educational Leader*, 40(3), 8-14.