

## APSU Writing Center

### Reflective Essay

#### What is a Reflective Essay?

- A reflective essay examines what you learned from a specific text, event, or experience.
- Its purpose is to encourage critical thinking and self-awareness by exploring how the experience affected you and what you gained from it.
- Remember that reflective essays aim to deepen your understanding of a specific assignment or experience, so your thoughts, feelings, and insights are crucial.

#### What a Reflective Essay Is Not

- A simple summary of events
- A straightforward narrative of what happened
- An opinion about whether something was good or bad
  - Instead it focuses on insight and growth.

#### Before You Write

- Think carefully about your personal experience and its impact on you.

#### Ask Yourself

- What specific text, event, or experience am I reflecting on?
- How did I feel during the experience?
- What challenges or difficulties did I face?
- What did I learn?
- How has this experience influenced my future actions or decisions?
- What new insights have I gained about myself?

#### Style and Tone

- Use first person pronouns.
- Focus on personal experiences and insights rather than only stating facts.

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Reflective Essay

**Describe**

- Provide a clear, detailed account of the experience.
  - What was the text, event, or experience?
  - What happened?
  - When and where did it occur?
  - Who was involved?
  - What was my role?

**Interpret**

- Analyze the meaning and significance of the experience.
  - Did it meet my expectations? Why or why not?
  - What questions did it raise?
  - What aspects were most meaningful or challenging?

**Evaluate**

- Assess the positive and negative aspects of the experience.
  - What did I learn?
  - What went well, and what didn't?
  - How did this experience change my understanding or perspective?

**Plan**

- Explain how you will apply what you learned moving forward.
  - How will this experience influence my future actions?
  - What goals do I have as a result?
  - What steps will I take to improve or grow?

**Conclusion**

- Summarize the key insights from your reflection and reinforce what the experience taught you about yourself.



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### References

Cleveland State University Writing Center. (2026). *Reflection Papers*.

<https://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/reflection-papers>

George Mason University Writing Center. (n.d.). *Reflective Essays*.

<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/different-genres/reflective-essays>

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Reflective Essay Outline

**Describe:** Provide a clear, detailed account of the experience.

**Interpret:** Analyze the meaning and significance of the experience.

**Evaluate:** Assess the positive and negative aspects of the experience.

**Plan:** Explain how you will apply what you learned moving forward.

**Conclusion:** Summarize the key insights from your reflection.