

## Writing Reflectively Transcript

Reflective Writing is a process of putting into writing your reflective thinking. Reflective thinking is actually the important part of the process, the writing is just a way of documenting that this has happened. When people first start to reflect, they often think that it is about looking back at an event and thinking what they've learned from the experience. What they don't realise is that it is equally about looking forward: imagining future events and thinking about how the lessons you've learned could be applied. It is therefore a three stage process, looking back, analysing and projecting into the future. Without the third stage it could be pointless. It is also really important that when you look back at an event you don't just concentrate on it in isolation. You need to take a metaphorical step backwards so you can see it in the context of other events and other learning. These can and should influence your viewpoint when reflecting on that event. All of this can be written about in your reflective writing.

When most people reflect they write about what happened and when it happened, often in the form of a timeline. I did this, then I did that, they write about who was involved and perhaps where it happened. These are useful things but they are basically descriptive and writing about them does not actually contribute to useful reflection. Instead, you should write about your thoughts about the event, during it, after it and since. You should also include information about how you feel, were you uncomfortable doing it? Did you feel confident about it? Instead of what when who and where, you need to write about why. Why did you do it that way? How? How will you change it in the future? You should also think about the implications, you learned something but so what? How does that help you? Writing that answers these questions is truly reflective.

So, how much description is needed and how much reflection? Description is important but should be kept to a minimum, it exists merely in order to put the reflection into context. A typical piece of reflective writing should have short bouts of description followed by a lot of reflection. One important part of reflection is hindsight, this is the ability to look back at an event with knowledge that wasn't available during the event. Typically some hindsight will initially hit immediately following an event as a result of the knowledge gained in the process of that event. This is the 'If only..' moment when you first look back. What then happens is you gain more hindsight gradually over time as more knowledge becomes available. This can be incredibly frustrating if you think you can't change things. However, if at the point you reflect you realise you've learned a lot from the experience and you can change things in the future, this is actually very empowering.

When writing about that learning it is important to not only think about how it can be directly applied to similar situations but how it can be adapted and translated to other situations. For instance, if you have to give a presentation, you may spend a lot of time preparing for it and be really happy with the way that it went when you delivered it, but what if someone afterwards asks you a really awkward question? One you hadn't prepared for? You might feel

a bit flustered and not answer it how you would have liked. When you reflect on this you may write about how you did not like that feeling and in future presentations you'll need to think about more possible questions and prepare answers beforehand. However, you might also think about other situations where thinking beyond the immediate problem could come in useful and you may realise that despite being unprepared you did manage to give an answer of sorts. This may make you realise that you can think on your feet and give you confidence to do the same in other situations. You can put all of these thoughts into your reflective writing.

If you imagine experience as a wet cloth, the purpose of reflection is to wring every last drop of learning out of that experience. It's also about showing that you can put that learning into action. Nobody's saying this is easy, when you first start writing your reflections down it can seem very strange. You may learn things about yourself that you're not comfortable with, you can feel like you're really struggling uphill. However when it becomes a regular activity it can feel perfectly normal and relatively easy. The great thing about reflecting is that it's very rewarding. When you realise that you can analyse things and work out possible ways forward for yourself, your self-confidence gets a real boost. Reflective writing is just a way to formalise and encourage such reflective thinking.