

A quick guide to writing a reflection paper prepared for UBMS students with content from UNH, UMN, and wikihow.

What?

- What happened?
- What did you observe?
- What issue is being addressed or population is being served?

So What?

- Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?
- Did you hear, smell, or feel anything that surprised you?
- How is your experience different from what you expected?
- What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? (What lens are you viewing from?)
- What did you like/dislike about the experience?
- What did you learn about the people/community?

Now What?

- What seem to be the root causes of the issue addressed?
- What other work is currently happening to address the issue?
- What learning occurred for you in this experience?
- How can you apply this learning?
- What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?
- What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?
- What information can you share with your peers or the community?
- If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?

How has attending this event increased your understanding of the content in general?

How did attending this event aid in your professional growth?

What is the significance of the event content to yourself and/or your peers?

How has attending this event increased your desire to learn more about the content area in the future?

Discuss any new interests or values that you gained because of attending this presentation.

Organizing a Reflection Paper

Introduce your expectations. The introduction of your paper is where you should identify any expectations you had for the reading, lesson, or experience at the start.

Develop a thesis statement. At the end of your introduction, you should include a single sentence that quickly explains your transition from your expectations to your final conclusion.

This is essentially a brief explanation of whether or not your expectations were met.

A thesis provides focus and cohesion for your reflection paper.

You could structure a reflection thesis along the following lines: "From this reading/experience, I learned..."

Explain your conclusions in the body. Your body paragraphs should explain the conclusions or understandings you reached by the end of the reading, lesson, or experience.

Your conclusions must be explained. You should provide details on how you arrived at those conclusions using logic and concrete details.

Write a separate paragraph for each conclusion or idea you developed.

Each paragraph should have its own topic sentence. This topic sentence should clearly identify your major points, conclusions, or understandings.

Conclude with a summary. Your conclusion should succinctly describe the overall lesson, feeling, or understanding you got as a result of the reading or experience. The conclusions or understandings explained in your body paragraphs should support your overall conclusion. One or two may conflict, but the majority should support your final conclusion.

As You Write

Reveal information wisely. A reflection paper is somewhat personal in that it includes your subjective feelings and opinions. Instead of revealing everything about yourself, carefully ask yourself if something is appropriate before including it in your paper.

If you feel uncomfortable about a personal issue that affects the conclusions you reached, it is wisest not to include personal details about it. If a certain issue is unavoidable but you feel uncomfortable revealing your personal experiences or feelings regarding it, write about the issue in more general terms. Identify the issue itself and indicate concerns you have professionally or academically.

Maintain a professional or academic tone. A reflection paper is personal and objective, but you should still keep your thoughts organized and sensible.

Avoid dragging someone else down in your writing. If a particular person made the experience you are reflecting on difficult, unpleasant, or uncomfortable, you must still maintain a level of detachment as you describe that person's influence. Describe the actions, not the person, and frame those actions within the context of how they influenced your conclusions.

A reflection paper is one of the few pieces of academic writing in which you can get away with using the first person pronoun "I." That said, you should still relate your subjective feelings and opinions using specific evidence to explain them.

Avoid slang and always use correct spelling and grammar. Internet abbreviations like "LOL" or "OMG" are fine to use personally among friends and family, but this is still an academic paper, so you need to treat it with the grammatical respect it deserves. Do not treat it as a personal journal entry.

Check and double-check your spelling and grammar after you finish your paper.

Review your reflection paper at the sentence level. A clear, well-written paper must have clear, well-written sentences. Keep your sentences focused. Avoid squeezing multiple ideas into one sentence.

Use transitions. Transitional phrases shift the argument and introduce specific details. They also allow you to illustrate how one experience or detail directly links to a conclusion or understanding.

Relate relevant classroom information to the experience or reading. You can incorporate information you learned in the classroom with information addressed by the reading, lecture, or experience.

Citations

(2014) *Reflection in service-learning classes*. Retrieved January 30, 2014, from <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html>

(2013) *Course Reflection Paper Grading and Assessment Rubric*. Retrieved January 29, 2014, from http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCcQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.opennh.net%2Ffile.php%3Ffile%3D%2F1%2Ffiles%2FReflectionPaperRubric-OPENNH-current.pdf&ei=18_qUqnXJ4nlyAGO7YDQCA&usg=AFQjCNH3u_uFUMh16tVgBIPKK-weDSh51Q&sig2=ljNOpX84FC4kGNd4Qho0GA&bvm=bv.60444564,d.aWc

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