



# WRITING A CRITICAL REFLECTION

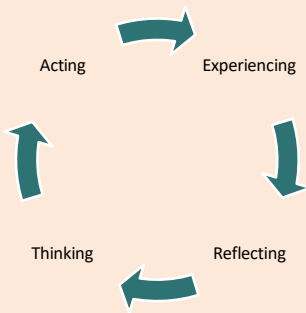


Figure 1 The experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2018)

Critical reflection is based on the idea that we learn from our experiences. It is used as a technique to uncover and evaluate our responses to an activity. Our understanding of these responses can then inform our future thought and actions.

A critical reflection can be 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. You think about your beliefs, perceptions, feelings and reactions in relation to a situation you have experienced. Then you describe these beliefs etc. using the framework for critical reflection outlined below.

## There are three 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 or 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. Consider questions such as:

- 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?

### 3. Plan future action

What implications do these reflections have for your understanding, thoughts, beliefs and perspectives?

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

### Features of critical reflective writing:

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- It is an analysis of your personal learning journey.
- The focus of writing is on your personal responses and reflections and less on the description of what happened. It is often written in the first person.
- It is 'critical' writing. You do more than describe events and your responses to them. You also analyse the events and your responses.

### Top tips:

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- 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. Respect the privacy of other participants and do not include any details that may identify them.
- Keep a journal for thoughts, responses and ideas. Use it to note details after an event, activity or practice observation. This helps you to recall the details of the experience and the reactions of yourself and others. It 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.



**Related resources:**

[Analysing the question](#)  
[Structure of a paragraph](#)

[All study resources](#)

