

Five Tips for Self-Reflection

When we practice self-reflection in a learning context, we have an opportunity to examine ourselves and gain transformative insights to apply to future experiences.

So, what does self-reflection look like in a university setting? And what are some important factors to consider as students? Here are five things to note:

First, it's important to know that reflecting will look different for everyone— from our actual reflective process to the content of our reflection, to how much time we might spend reflecting.

For example, let's say you and your classmate are both reflecting on a guest speaker visiting in class. You might both start off by describing a similar situation in your reflection and use the what, so what, and now what framework, but the focus of your reflection, your perspective and lived experience, your process and insights, as well as the take aways from this experience, will look different.

Understanding the type of reflection you are being asked to provide is also important. For example, if you've been assigned a reflective writing assignment with specific questions, you should be sure to answer the questions posed and be sure to include connections to your learning experience and course material.

Writing a reflection for class will look different than writing a daily reflection in your personal journal. You should be mindful of who your audience is too and who will be reading the reflection.

If your instructor provides any guidance, examples, or a rubric to guide you, be sure to review these items as well.

But remember, we can really reflect at any time and self- reflection doesn't need to always involve writing down our thoughts, though it can be helpful. You might practice self-reflection by taking some time to mentally reflect during your commute home after class each day.



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Getting into the habit of practicing daily self-reflection will help you become more reflective and develop this skill in your academic life. You can set daily reminders or dedicate a particular time each day to reflect. While you don't need to spend hours each day reflecting, it's important to meaningfully and consistently reflect in order to build up this skill, then to focus on reflecting for a long time or only after big events.

Reflecting on your learning experiences sooner rather than later can also be strategically helpful. For example, taking the time to reflect after each lecture can help you identify insights and actions you can take a lot sooner, so that you can benefit from them a lot sooner as well. If you take time to reflect after each lecture, you might identify strategies that helped you focus better in class that you can apply again next week or in other classes.

Self-reflection requires us to slow down, be curious, and think critically about our experiences. Whether you're reflecting on your own or completing a reflection assignment for class, it's important to focus on meaningfully going through the process, if we want to truly gain its benefits and develop this skill.

For example, in class, instead of just recounting an event, making general connections to course content or vague insights, it's important to articulate clear and detailed connections or new and critical insights you've gained to show that you are meaningfully reflecting.

Remember, the next time you are practicing self-reflection or working on a written reflection for class, be sure to, focus on the quality of your own reflection process and reflecting meaningfully think about the type of reflection you are being asked to provide and who your audience might be, practice self-reflection daily—the more we go through the process of reflecting, the more we develop this skill, and the more we apply it to different settings and learning experiences.

Good luck!



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