

## What is Self-Reflection and Why Does it Matter

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: define self-reflection, describe the process of self-reflection, recognize the benefits of self-reflection to one's learning and academic success, and engage in self-reflection.

Self-reflection is a powerful tool and an important part of learning. As a student, self-reflection is a way of examining yourself within a learning context, to gain transformative insights to apply to future experiences. Self-reflection helps us make important changes and decisions.

Without reflecting on how we study, learn, or work, we miss these opportunities and may find ourselves stuck in a routine that may not be working effectively. More importantly, without reflection, experience alone might cause us to reinforce stereotypes, offer simplistic solutions to complex problems and generalize inaccurately based on limited data.

We can develop reflection skills and self-reflection through practice and feedback.

In a classroom setting, your instructor may ask you to reflect on course content, an activity or experience, or on your own learning process.

After a presentation or interview, or after an assignment is submitted, you can also practice self-reflection to help you gain important insights about yourself and make important changes based on your experience. One way to go through a reflective process is to follow a “What? So What? Now What?” framework.

You can first start by defining the experience or activity or situation. Think about your own actions and experience, and be specific. Then you can ask yourself: What was the significance of this experience, for example, to you personally, to course material? What connections are important? This is the “so what” piece.

And finally, what are the important insights? And what changes or next steps will you make based on these insights? This is the “now what” part.

By going through this framework and asking yourself these three questions you can engage in a process of ongoing reflection.

It's important to note that you might find yourself initially more focused on answering the “what” than the “so what” or the “now what” steps of this framework. Naturally, this question might be a little easier and quicker to tackle, but it's in the latter two steps where we really begin to practice our reflection skills and gain valuable insights we can use.



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It's important we give ourselves time here.

One tip is to set aside a few minutes to just think about each of these reflection questions before answering.

Let your mind wonder about the experience you're reflecting on and what you've learned or been hoping to learn, list any questions or thoughts that may pop up. You can even sketch out your thoughts and doodle as you think. Feel free to spend time outdoors or be in your favourite spot at home as you reflect. Remember, you can develop reflection skills and self-reflection through practice and feedback, so keep going!

In class, your instructor may ask you to reflect on a real-world example, consider the experience from multiple perspectives and provide a written reflection. They may ask you to think about your own assumptions and beliefs.

This reflective exercise can help you develop many other skills too, including self-awareness, making connections between course content and real-world context, analysis, communication, and critical thinking, but it also offers an opportunity to examine yourself.

Was it challenging to think through multiple perspectives? Why? And what do your assumptions or beliefs say about you?

Your instructor may also ask you questions that will help you think about your own learning and how you are doing in the course, through short surveys and other written responses, but you can also practice self-reflection by keeping a reflection journal to note important experiences and go through our "what, so what, now what" framework as you learn new content and achieve milestones.

So, self-reflection is a powerful tool. It gives us the opportunity to think about our skills and motivations and make important changes based on these insights. To excel as learners and professionals, self-reflection is a skill we need to always be practicing and developing.



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