Reflective writing can be included in a variety of different assignment tasks. It can include keeping a reflective journal or learning log with multiple entries – particularly for professional placements – or be part of an essay or report. Reflective writing aims to get you to think about and understand your learning experiences. This outline is an approach to reflective writing, using a DIEP strategy.

The DIEP strategy

The four steps in this approach (adapted from Boud, D 1985, Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning) are to describe, interpret, evaluate and plan.

D – Describe objectively what happened.
• Answer the question: ‘What did I do, read, see, hear, etc?’

I – Interpret the events.
• Consider why events happened in the way they did. Explain:
  − what you saw and heard
  − your new insights
  − your connections with other learning
  − your feelings – your hypotheses and/or conclusions
• Answer the question: ‘what might this mean?’

E – Evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of the experience.
• Make judgements that are clearly connected to observations you have made. Answer the questions:
  − What is my opinion about this experience?
  − What is the value of this experience?
  − Why do I think this?

P – Plan how this information will be useful to you.
• Consider: In what ways might this learning experience serve me in my:
  − course
  − program
  − future career
  − life generally
• Answer the question: ‘How will I transfer or apply my new knowledge and insights in the future?’

DIEP Strategy for writing a reflection

In your entries, attempt to:
• analyse your own performance as a learner
• evaluate your gains in understanding and completing tasks
• verbalise how you feel about your learning
• make connections with other experiences, ideas
• demonstrate transfer of learning
• integrate the concepts taught in courses (including the literature where relevant)

The following is a writing strategy for reflective journal entries in four paragraphs.
D – Describe objectively what happened
Describe objectively what happened. Give the details of what happened. Answer the question: ‘What did I do, read, see, hear?’

I – Interpret the events
Explain your learning: new insights, connections with other learning, your feelings, hypotheses, conclusions. Answer the questions: ‘What was the reason I did this activity?’ ‘What might it mean?’

E – Evaluate what you learn
Make judgments connected to observations you have made. Answer the question: ‘How was this useful?’

P – Plan how this learning will be applied
Comment on its relevance to your course, program, future profession, life... Answer the question: ‘How might this learning apply in my future?’