

What is Reflective Writing?

Reflective writing, also known as personal writing, requires you to reflect on the topic on a personal level. Reflective writing is not based on research on the topic, but instead centers on your opinions, thoughts, and experiences.

The purpose of reflective writing is to serve as an evaluation—perhaps on what you have learned or discovered.

My Past, Present, and Future

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PSY 111

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If you are asked to write a reflective paper for a formal assignment, you'll need to include a **title page**. If your reflective writing is for a more informal assignment, such as a discussion post, you won't need to include a title page. Be sure to read your specific assignment instructions.

You will use **first person point of view**, meaning you will use “I” and “me” in your writing. This type of writing is less formal than academic writing used in argumentative or research papers.

My Past, Present, and Future

I never thought I would be 42 years old and writing a paper like this one. I had planned to go to college right after high school, but life does not always happen according to plan. I will present a brief description of a few of my life experiences that have helped shape the person I am today and analyze some of these experiences using the adult development theories from this class. I will also look ahead to the goals I want to accomplish in the future.

In order to fully capture her main ideas, the writer begins with personal experiences from her background and builds in chronological order.

I grew up in a military family. My earliest childhood memories are from living at the Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, as the oldest child. My mother left the Air Force, but my father continued in the service for another two years apart in age, and my childhood was fairly ordinary until I was about ten years old when my father was deployed to Japan. My family planned to join him there, but we had to wait for about a year until Dad could arrange housing for us.

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My exciting trip abroad turned out to be very short-lived. After we had been in Japan for only about a year, my parents called us kids together one evening and announced that they were getting a divorce. I was devastated. My mother, four brothers and sisters, and I boarded a plane to return to the States. I waved goodbye to my father at the airport, and it was the last time I would see him until a chance meeting when I was 21 years old. Whenever his tour of duty was nearing an end, he requested another remote assignment to remain overseas. He was never part of our lives again. Eventually, he remarried and started another family.

Mom, the other kids, and I settled in a small rural community in northern California. Life for a single mother with five children must have been rough, but Mom rarely complained. She found a job as a secretary for a local furniture store, and we always had a roof over our heads and food on the table. My mother's job paid only about \$300 a month, however, and our rent was

MY PAST

The writer includes **specific details** about her own personal experiences and opinions to provide insight into her reflection.

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\$100 a month. So, not much money was left for groceries and other expenses. Since I was only 10 years old, and my siblings were younger, we could not get jobs to help support the family.

However, in an agricultural area, everyone was needed at harvest time. So, about six months of the year we worked in the fields after school. We also got our school lunches free under a program for “needy children,” which helped with the grocery bill. When I grew older, I was hired at the town library and worked year-round after school. On Saturdays, Mom made sure that, in addition to schoolwork and play, we all practiced our typing. “If you can type,” she said, “you can always find a job.”

When I was in high school, I worked after school as a waitress at our local ice cream parlor. This was my dream job. I made a decent salary and tips from waiting tables, and I had all the ice cream sundaes I could eat! I had planned to attend college when I graduated from high school, but then I met Joe. Joe was different from the guys I had dated before. He was five years older than I was, and he was much more mature than boys my age. Joe and I dated for about three months and, when I was 17, I lied about my age, and we eloped to Las Vegas to get married. I was much too young, but no one could convince me, at the time, that marrying Joe was a mistake. I expected to live happily ever after. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be. Our marriage lasted less than two years. I do not regret it, though; the marriage gave me my wonderful son, who is the light of my life.

In our studies of adult development theory, I was interested to learn about Erikson’s theories of psychosocial stages. Our text tells us that Erikson believed adolescents “anguish over who they are and how they fit into their social world” (Witt & Mossler, 2010, section 2.3, para. 9). I certainly went through this stage. At age 17, I did not know who I was or what I wanted to do with my life, and I believed that becoming a wife and mother would give me a sense of

Here, the writer is reflecting on how her personal experience relates to concepts she is learning in the course.

identity and belonging. However, I discovered that until I matured and found my own identity, I was unable to have a fulfilling marriage.

Like my own mother, I became a single mom with no college education. Thanks to Mom's insistence that I learn to type, I was able to find clerical work to support myself and my son. But, I missed the companionship that a good marriage was supposed to provide, and I remember this period as one of the loneliest of my life. My great joy, though, was spending time with my son. I have great memories of serving as his Cub Scout leader, attending his Little League baseball games, and watching him perform in the school play.

Here, the writer continues to reflect back on aspects of her early adulthood in order to draw a deeper, meaningful impression about those experiences.

At work one day I met a terrific guy named Frank. Frank was about my age and had been divorced. He had started college but had dropped out to obtain his real estate license to support his wife and baby. Frank's daughter was a couple of years younger than my son, and our children immediately became friends. Frank and I dated for a year, and then we were married. I am happy to say that this marriage has been a success. Frank is a wonderful husband and father. My son is now a senior in high school, and Frank's daughter will finish middle school this year.

The last few years of my life have been happy and busy. I was hired in an entry-level

Here, the writer takes a step back to fully observe what she has learned by self-analyzing. If you find yourself struggling with this aspect of your paper, think about how you would complete this sentence: "When I look back, I realize _____."

position at a large bank, and I have earned several promotions. Frank continues to be successful in the real estate, and we both enjoy raising our two children. Last year, though, I overheard my friend that college was not important because his parents had not graduated. About that time, my manager told me I was not eligible for a promotion at work because the position I was applying for required a college degree. My son's comment and my manager's statement made me realize that it was time for me to go back and earn that college degree. As our text explains, education is an important source of learning (Witt & Mossler, 2010), and I also want to set a

good example for my children. So, a few months ago, I began to research my options.

Now I find myself writing a college paper. My skills are a little rusty, but I am enjoying this new challenge. I can see now that my mother's struggles and desires for me are similar to the struggles I faced and the desires that I want for my own children. My mother encouraged me to learn a skill to be more independent. I am now taking that a step further by going to college and setting an example for my children to model. I had forgotten how much fun it could be to learn new things, and I enjoy sharing my new knowledge with my family. I hope my excitement rubs off on my children and that they choose to go on to college as well.

Conclude your reflection with a discussion or an evaluation of what you learned from reflecting on your experiences.

Writing

References

Witt, G. A., & Mossler, R. A. (2010). *Adult development and life assessment*. Retrieved from <https://content.ashford.edu/AUPSY202.10>.

Writing Center