What is reflective writing?

Reflection is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2012) as “The action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one’s past life and experiences.” Reflection is a way of enabling self-development and deeper learning by looking back at an experience so as to learn from it and then move forward. A person may discuss learning from an experience; reflective writing takes this a stage further by putting the reflection into the more permanent and structured format of a written account and linking it to academic theory (University of Wolverhampton).

Why reflect?

We reflect so we can:

- learn from our experience through reflection
- consider and explore feelings, reactions, responses in more depth
- explore situations from different perspectives
- gain skills to move forward
- explore gaps in our knowledge
- look at how we can adapt to situations
- look at relationship between theory and practice
- ‘We reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting’ (Moon, 2007).

Reflection enables self-development and deeper learning by reviewing past experiences to learn from them and move forward more informed about what to do the next time.
Models of reflection

Gibbs’ (1988) reflective cycle is a popular model for reflection. The model includes 6 stages of reflection and is presented below.

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Gibbs’ (1988) reflective cycle

Description
What happened?

Action plan
If it arose again, what would you do?

Feelings
What were you thinking and feeling?

Conclusion
What else could you have done?

Evaluation
What was good and bad about the experience?

Analysis
What sense can you make of the situation?
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“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created by the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984)

Fostering Collaborative Redesign of Work Practice: Challenges for Tools Supporting Reflective Work