Reflective writing

Learn how to write a reflective text about a learning experience.

Before reading, do the preparation task. Then read the text and tips, and do the exercises. Finally, write your own reflective writing about a learning experience (an internship, helping your parents in their business, volunteering at school, learning an instrument or a sport...).

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–f) with the vocabulary (1–6).

Vocabulary	Definition
1. ..... an individual	a. to work for an organisation without being paid
2. ..... to volunteer	b. to change something to make it suit different conditions
3. ..... a challenge	c. a single person, not a group
4. ..... focus	d. something new and difficult to do
5. ..... in general	e. a point to think about or concentrate on
6. ..... to adapt	f. overall

Reading text: Reflective writing

In January I spent three weeks volunteering as an English teacher in my town. I've been thinking about becoming an English teacher for a while so it was a good opportunity to see what it's like. The students had all just arrived to start a new life in the UK and they had a range of levels from beginner to intermediate. They came from a variety of countries and had very different backgrounds and experiences.

For me, the most important thing was the relationship with the students. I was nervous at first and did not feel confident about speaking in front of people. However, I found it easy to build good relationships with the students as a class and as individuals and I soon relaxed with them. It was a challenge to encourage the lower-level students to speak in English, but at least they understood a lot more at the end of the course.

At first, planning lessons took a really long time and I was not happy with the results. Classes seemed to be too difficult for some students and too easy for others, who finished quickly and got bored. I found it was better to teach without a course book, adapting materials I found online to suit their needs. I learned to take extra activities for students who finished early and that was much better.

I still need to continue improving my lesson planning. I would like more ideas for teaching mixed-ability groups and I want to plan the whole course better next time. That way students have a focus for each lesson and a sense of progress and of what they've covered. I'm also going to put more confident students with beginners when they work in pairs so conversation activities give everyone more chance to speak and students can help each other.

Overall, it was a really positive experience and I learned a lot. I've decided that I would like to become an English teacher in the future.

Tips

1. Reflective writing is more personal than other types of academic writing. You can use the first person (I ... , My ... , etc.) and explain how you felt.

2. Think about the experience in detail. Explain what went well and what was challenging, and say what you learned in the process.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3. Use a structure:

• Short introduction to the situation

• Evaluate the most important things about the experience, including solutions to problems

• Say what you would do differently next time

• Say what you learned overall.

4. Keep the focus on your learning process and what you will do better in future.

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

1. You should keep your writing impersonal. ----------
2. It is better not to say if something was difficult. ----------
3. You should say what went well and what could be improved. ----------
4. You do not have to describe the experience in detail – just the important bits. ----------
5. You should include solutions to problems you had. ----------
6. You should finish by describing exactly what you did. ----------

Task 2

Write the sentences in the correct group.

I was nervous at first. At first, planning lessons took a really long time. I soon relaxed with them. I found it was better to teach without a course book. I did not feel confident about speaking in front of people. I learned to take extra activities for students who finished early. It was a challenge to encourage the lower-level students to speak in English. I'm going to put more confident students with beginners so they can help each other. I learned to take extra activities for students who finished early. I spent three weeks volunteering as an English teacher.

EXPERIENCE	FEELINGS	SOLUTIONS/LEARNING

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Task 3

Write one word in each gap to complete the sentences.

1. I spent two months volunteering ..... a medical assistant.

2. I helped with a variety ..... tasks.

3. They had a range of patients ..... young children to adults.

4. It was a challenge ..... finish all the work in one day.

5. There were a lot of things I didn't know, but ..... least I could help the nurse, who was on her own most of the time.

6. I would like more first-aid training ..... I can help in a medical emergency.

Your turn: What was your last challenging learning experience?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS