

Gibbs' Model of the Reflective Cycle

Below is a six stage approach to reflective writing using Gibbs' (1988) model:

Stage One: Description	
What happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on something that happened during your placement, something that taught you about yourself as a nurse. It may have been new to your experience. Give an account of it, describing everything relevant that went on. Keep to the point, avoid all unnecessary detail. Your purpose at this stage is to give your reader a clear picture of what went on.
Stage Two: Feelings	
<p>What did you feel about it?</p> <p>What did you think about?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are bound to have feelings about what happened. You may have felt anxious, especially if what happened was new to you. The important thing is to show how you managed to do what was expected of you despite your anxiety. Try to describe/explain your feelings. What was affecting them? – the actions of others (experienced staff, the patient, family); knowledge that you held (something which patient had disclosed to you earlier, personal thoughts/opinion on the issue)? Were you thinking - 'That's a useful thing to do' or 'I wouldn't do that or why are they doing that...' ? Did your thoughts and feelings change during the scenario? If so, why? Did your thoughts and feelings affect your actions at the time? Looking back, have your views changed?
Stage Three: Evaluation	
What was good or bad about the experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think went well in the situation? Did you learn anything useful as a result of taking part in what went on? Did anything give you cause for concern – either in what others did or what you did? Was there something which you would not wish to experience again? Was there anything that the patient/the family said that made you think or taught you something?
Stage Four: Analysis	
What sense can you make of it all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using secondary sources (books, journals, websites etc), this is where you explore some of the key issues raised in the scenario. You can show how well you are keeping up with 'evidence based' practice. Show the knowledge you have about a particular patient/client problem/need. Show that you understand what causes the problem/need. Explain how nurses can help. Show that you understand the prescribed medication/other therapies. Show that you recognise that patients/clients are individuals and may not respond to care in the way the textbooks/journal articles lead you to expect.

Stage Five: Conclusion	
What else could you have done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you have learned anything by talking to the patient/client/the family about the experience? • Was there anything you should have noticed, that you should have done/reported/asked about/read about? • Was there anything you could have discussed with your mentor/supervisor/tutor? • Is there any literature that you now think you ought to look at – or any advice you could look for?
Stage Six: Action Plan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the experience helped you to improve your practice? • Has it revealed your strengths (as well as your weaknesses!)? • How would you respond in a similar situation? Do you feel more confident? • What advice would you give to other learners in similar situations when you are a qualified nurse responsible for looking after learners on placement in your clinical area? • Will you be better able to communicate with patients/clients/families because of what you experienced?

References and further reading:

Adapted from: Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.