

READ TO LEARN! WRITE TO LEARN!

GILLIE BOLTON



Write to Learn

Before you begin on any of these, I suggest you start writing in a way which sets off any session really fruitfully (see Chapter 8 of *Reflective Practice Writing and Professional Development*):

- Take a clean page, or new screen.
- Allow yourself to write whatever comes in whatever order for about six minutes.
- This is completely private writing so it doesn't matter if it wanders or jumps about: our minds do naturally. One of these jumps might be inspired.
- Allow yourself not to worry about punctuation, spelling, continuity or form (these can be sorted out later if necessary). The only thing that matters is that you write whatever is in your mind at that time.

This has three functions; it can:

1. Get you started putting words on the page. Nothing is more off-putting to any writer, however experienced, than the blank page/screen.
2. Help to lay on one side current pressing concerns (Things Which Need to Be Done) until later. Listing these things can help with this.
3. Capture inspirations lurking at the back of your mind which otherwise might never be expressed.

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After you have written the accounts and reflections upon them, as suggested below, move your reflecting to a different level. How does the writing you have done impinge upon, or become affected by, or clarify appropriate theoretical readings?



Read to Learn

Most of the recommended publications concern specific professions, even specific areas of that profession (e.g. music education). All of them, however, can be useful to practitioners from most professions. Nearly all the advice and research in these publications is appropriate to reflective practice in general.



Write to Learn

Foreword

Start with 6 minutes of free writing, as described above.

At the end of a day, write a Stephen Brookfield critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) (1995, 2009). Focus critically upon specific elements (incidents) of your day, responding to these questions:

- At what moment did you feel most engaged?
- At what moment were you most distanced?
- What action of another person did you find most affirming or helpful?
- What action did you find most puzzling or confusing?
- What surprised you most?



Read to Learn

http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/Dr._Stephen_D._Brookfield/Home.html

Brookfield S.D. (2009) Engaging critical reflection in corporate America. In: Fostering transformative learning. In J Mezirow, EW Taylor and Associates. *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from community, workplace and higher education*, pp125–136. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Brookfield, S.D. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Chapter 1: Introduction



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as described above.

Sometimes our lives feel crammed up with piles of stuff.

Think of the most everyday (even boring!) recent work event. Write the story of it from beginning to end.

Reread.

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Now take a scene from it, and rewrite it perceiving details. You might find yourself describing a person you had never before looked at with interest and care, or a place or object, or smell, taste or sense of touch.

Reread. What does this make you feel? What do you think you felt at the time?

A problem with being busy is that we don't take time to observe. Writing in this way can encourage us to find something to value even in the most mundane.

It can also do more; it can enable an understanding of situations which is impossible during the un-noticing rush of our everyday lives.

Write reflecting upon what you feel you have learned from this.



Read to Learn

Martin, I. (2014) 'Developing reflective practice: A guide for students and practitioners of health and social care', *Natius Oelofsen in Journal of Social Work* 14: 217–218

This is a thoughtful and valuable book review. I present this review to you, my reader, rather than the book, as I feel this book will either be perfect for you, or not suit you at all.

Ashmore L. and Robinson D. (2014) Learning, Teaching and Development. London: Sage Publications.

Chapter 10 outlines Ashmore and Robinson's key features of CPD and reflective learning in teaching, identifying what they consider meaningful to individuals' learning and growth and its potential impact on their profession. The chapter, which contains discussion questions, learning activities and reflective points, helps with identifying learning needs and objectives and assessment, evaluation and reflection.

Chapter 2: Values and Principles of Reflective Practice



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as described above.

Look up, look out at your hopes and dreams.

Write a letter to your present self from your elderly future self.

Did you achieve your dreams?

Did you focus upon the *right* dreams? None of us wants to get old and realise we chased after the wrong ambitions, ignoring what was special and right.

Write the reply from your old self.

Where did this interchange take you?





Read to Learn

Hibbert, P. (2012) 'Approaching Reflexivity Through Reflection: Issues for Critical Management Education'. *Journal of Management Education*. 37(6) 803–827

This article seeks to develop insights for teaching reflexivity in undergraduate management classes through developing processes of critical reflection. Four principles are developed: first, preparing and making space for reflection in the particular class context; second, stimulating and enabling critical thinking through dialogue, in particular in relation to diversity and power issues; third, unsettling comfortable viewpoints through the critical reappraisal of established concepts and texts; and fourth, supporting the development of different, critical perspectives through exploring ideologies. The process described was derived from theoretical insights largely grounded in educational research among experienced managers, not undergraduate students, so its use should be seen as an active learning situation for educators, rather than as a blueprint for teaching. Advice and experience from this paper can fruitfully be engaged with by lecturers of any professional practice.

West, C. (2013) 'Developing Reflective Practitioners: Using Video-Cases in Music Teacher Education'. *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 22(2): 11–19

This article first discusses the process of reflective thinking and its importance to preservice teacher education. Next are implications for using video-cases to help preservice music teachers critically examine their beliefs and shift their focus from themselves to their students. Finally, Chad West describes research for structuring video-case experiences, along with recommendations for using video-cases in the music education classroom. These experiences can be used to inform practitioners from many professions as well as music teachers.

Chapter 3: Theories and Contexts of Reflective Practice



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as described above.

Have you ever felt like a pawn? Pushed around the chess board by a more powerful hand?

Choose one of those occasions. Write about it in full. Complain as much as you like on to the paper. Be angry with the powerful ones, swear even; no one else need ever see this draft!

Now write about the event as if from the point of view of the powerful one (this person will be 'I' in this account). Try to write perceiving the situation really from their perspective. Describe yourself and what you did and said (you will write about yourself calling yourself by your name, rather than 'I').

Reread. If you are dissatisfied with some of the ways this has come out, do write another version. It can take time to get into the skin of someone else, particularly someone you are angry with!



Read to Learn

Lawrence, H. (2013) 'Personal, Reflective Writing: A Pedagogical Strategy for Teaching Business Students to Write'. *Business Communication Quarterly* 76(2): 192–205.

This article looks at pedagogy and theory that informs the use of personal, reflective writing exercises in composition and management and suggests their relevance to business communication classrooms. Building on relevant pedagogical theory and practice, the author also claims that personal reflective writing exercises can make students better writers and more effective managers and leaders. The article

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concludes with sample exercises that readers might try in their own classrooms. Holly Lawrence is writing about teaching business communication, but her experience of using writing exercises is just as valid for any professional classroom.

Crawford, M. (2014) *Developing as an Educational Leader and Manager*. London: Sage Publications.

This creatively thoughtful book supports readers to reflect upon becoming (or developing their skills as) effective leaders and managers in education, at all levels. Maintaining that effective leadership combines organisational skills and personal qualities, the authors raise issues such as values and boundaries, and approaches to change. These issues are all vital to reflective practice.

Chapter 4: The Power of Narrative



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as described above.

Everything we do has roots reaching back in our experience.

Allow your pen/keyboard to gather memories of an occasion significant to you.

Write an account of the event: what happened, who said what, when and where, how it turned out, why you think that happened.

Now allow yourself to reflect upon any occasions in your past which seem at all similar.

Make a list of them.

Does one (or more) of these resonate with you particularly?

Tell the story in writing of whichever one seems most vital, including as many details as occur to you.

Now write a further passage reflecting on the similarities and differences and what you feel you now understand having compared the two occasions by writing narratives. Reflect for example upon:

What makes these occasions significant, do you think?

What were the similarities between them?

What were the differences?

Do you think the former event(s) affected how you reacted to the later one(s)? If not, make another list, seeing if you can think of an earlier event with some similarities.

Write about that and reflect upon them together.



Read to Learn

Rowland, S. (1993) 'The Story of the Silent Woman: Reflections on Power', ch. 7, *The Enquiring Tutor*. London: Falmer Press.

Rowland explores the use of fiction to enquire into vital issues of higher education pedagogy: power and silence. He experiments with the role of narrator and an innovative use of second person singular. The omniscient narrator addresses the main character (the course tutor within the story) directly as 'you'. This story and reflection is a valuable read for any profession.

Gold, K. (2013) 'A Space for Stories: Revisiting relational poetry as inquiry on everyday practice', *Qualitative Social Work* 12(6): 849–857

Karen Gold presents a poetic dialogue and reflects upon it to enable a discussion of the role of poetic writing in creating possibilities for new conversations on the everyday meanings of practice.

Chapter 5: Perspective



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as described above.

Think of an occasion in your working life when you learned something from the experience.

Write about the occasion as fully as you can, from your own perspective (with you as 'I').

Now work out who was the most significant other person (client or colleague perhaps).

Write about the occasion again, this time from this other person's point of view. They will be 'I' this time and you will be – whatever your name is.

Now reread both pieces, and write a few paragraphs more about anything that strikes you from this change of perspective writing.



Read to Learn

Woods, M. (2012) "There is only narrative": Using case studies in nursing ethics', *Nursing Ethics* 19(1): 5–6.

Using narratives in teaching professional ethics creates, in this author's experience, rapt attention from students for whom the narrative becomes a temporary reality. The power

of stories about moral meaning and ethical actions should never be underestimated. The well-told narrative or case study can be much more than reflection on practice; it can also be a testimony of the value of ethics within shared practices. A critical analysis of in-depth narratives not only allows the participants to acknowledge the wide range of responses that are found not only within social and personal ways, but to also develop insights that may lead to transformative practice. This can lead to better ethical decision making and ultimately improved nursing care for all. This article concerns nursing, but using narratives in any professional education is a powerful way to teach ethics.

Chapter 6: The Power of Metaphor



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

Does your life ever feel like this? Mine does sometimes.



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In the pile in the picture, I can see some yellow pages, some pink, and some green. Lower down, there are probably red and blue as well.

If we levered these pages out, what might be on them?

Choose one of these colours.

Write about an occasion from your life which might be on the blue, red, green, pink, or yellow pages.

Now choose another colour, write about this event or incident. What did you feel at the time? What do you feel about it now?

Reread, and write a few paragraphs more reflecting upon this writing. What learning can you draw out of it? What further questions can you ask?



Read to Learn

Gravengaard, G. (2012) 'The metaphors journalists live by: journalists' conceptualisation of newswork', *Journalism* 13(8) 1064–1082.

This article presents an analysis of professional journalists' everyday language, in particular of their everyday metaphors, to grasp their self-understanding and assumptions about news work. This analysis examines these professional practitioners' tacit expert knowledge and the conclusion is that several different metaphors – and thus different conceptualisations of news work – coexist. This study presents an opportunity for professionals to reflect upon, and become aware of, the tacit knowledge used in their routinised practice. Practitioners from any other profession would benefit from reflecting upon their practice by examining their habitual metaphors, in a similar way.

Southall, D. (2013). 'The patient's use of metaphor within a palliative care setting: Theory, function and efficacy. A narrative literature review', *Palliative Medicine*. 27(4) 304–313.

Patients' modes of communication are important within palliative care and have been the focus of much research. This literature review aims to identify, analyse and study the therapeutic usefulness of metaphor. Patients' metaphors were found to be varied and diverse; Southall categorises them into broad groupings: war, journeying, personhood, the natural world, and existential concepts. The papers reviewed suggest that metaphoric communication allows sensitive subjects to be dealt with and provides benefits for patients. The results suggest that

engaging with patients at the metaphoric level enables them to create new ways of viewing their situation and opens up the possibilities of new coping strategies. Some ways forward are suggested which will allow the efficacy of metaphor to be explored further within palliative care settings.

Chapter 7: Writing As Reflection



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

We are many different people in our lives, depending on the situation.

There is the professional me, the life-partner, colleague, parent/aunt/uncle/grandparent, the best friend, and so on.

Sometimes, one part of ourselves knows something another part does not. For example, we react to our own parents, siblings, or in-laws in ways in which we would never respond to a colleague or client.

Choose occasions when you were definitely one side of yourself.

Now choose an occasion when you were very much one of the others.

Can you perceive any difference in behaviour at the time, or response to the occasion on reflection? If not, try writing about more occasions until you do begin to see how you and others are different.

Reflect in writing on this.





Read to Learn

Enskär, K. (2012) 'Being an Expert Nurse in Pediatric Oncology Care: Nurses' Descriptions in Narratives', *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing* 29(3): 151–160

Sixty-six nurses working in pediatric oncology wrote narratives for this study, which concluded that when nurses are given possibilities for continuous education and reflection, and have a feeling of satisfaction at being able to fulfill their patients' or families' needs, this enhances their possibility to become experts and maintain expert competence. This is true for any profession.

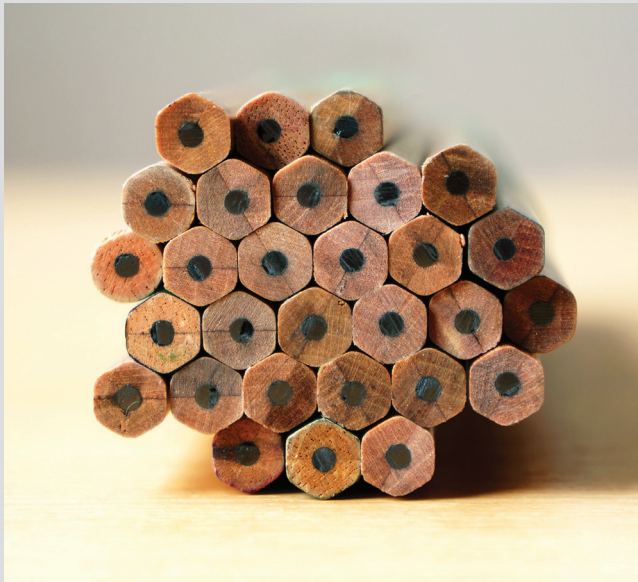
Chapter 8: Reflective & Reflexive Writing: How



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

Find a pencil, a pad of paper, a rubber and pencil sharpener.



Find a spare half hour.

Find a place entirely different from where you generally write.

Sit and ask the pencil to write something significant for you.

Write for at least six minutes, preferably more, without stopping or rereading.

When you want to stop: reread, underline words or phrases which seem significant.

Put each one of these at the top of the page in turn and write as above under each one.

Now write a paragraph about how this process has made you feel: what has it made you think?



Read to Learn

Purcell, D. (2013) 'Using Writing to Improve Teaching and Reflective Practice', *Teaching Sociology* 41(1) 5–19.

David Purcell describes a method for continual teaching improvement based on writing, the well-established practice of teacher reflection, and classical sociological principles. He developed it through analysing daily reflective notes made over nine semesters. This practice can help teachers refine individual courses, improve as an instructor in an overall sense and more deeply connect sociology to the scholarship of teaching and learning. This paper concerns the improvement of lecturing and is appropriate for any subject.

Matthews, C. (2013) 'Critical pedagogy in health education', *Health Education Journal* November 25, online.

Catherine Matthews studies the literature on the usefulness of critical pedagogy. She finds that it ensures learners have an opportunity to critically engage with health information rather than to simply be passive recipients of it. It aims to focus learning on the problems, issues and real-world experience of the learners, facilitates problem-posing education, and challenges the learner to question practices that support inequality. The three phases are: listening and naming; dialogue and reflection; the promoting of transformative social action. This critical evaluation can be used appropriately by any reflective practitioner.

Chapter 9: Reflective Practice Journals



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

Sometimes we feel undistinguished, undistinguishable from everyone else.

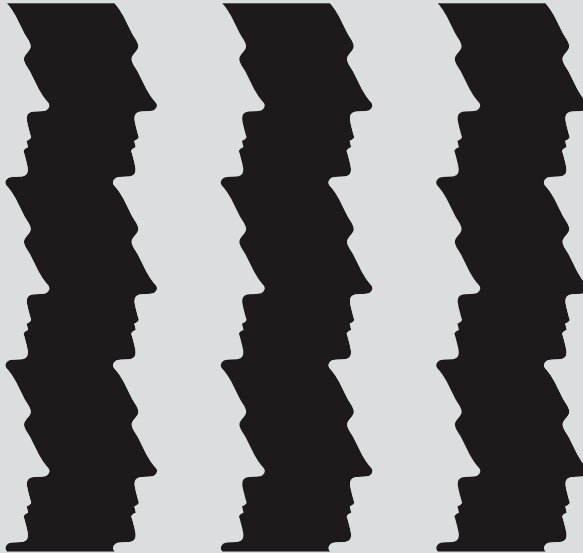
Yet you are unique. Your life is unique.

Begin a *gratitude journal*. Write for a few minutes every day about something good which has happened for you that day. Perhaps a client said 'thank you' particularly warmly, smiling into your eyes as they did so.

Today an unknown reader of one of my books wrote to me and said how it had changed his life. There was no need for him to write, yet he did. He bothered to go out of his way. I was lifted from a day of drudgery.

What has happened in your day to lift it?

Writing every day means we have to focus, be aware of good things, of the people who really notice what we do for them, for example.





Read to Learn

Cowan, J. (2014) 'Noteworthy matters for attention in reflective journal writing', *Active Learning in Higher Education* 15(1): 53–64.

This article was prompted by the impression that practice and theorising reported in publications about journal writing does not consistently endorse the advice in the major literature, and is potentially confusing for those who seek advice and direction. In particular, some writers tolerate or encourage narrative reporting without significant reflection thereon; many articles only feature aspects of the reflective cycle, and metacognitive forward planning that aims to validate the emerging generalisation is often neglected. Noteworthy matters are identified for attention and suggestions made for an approach that today's journal writers and their mentors may find helps them focus reflections better and validate their generalisations.

Chapter 10: Assessment and Evaluation



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

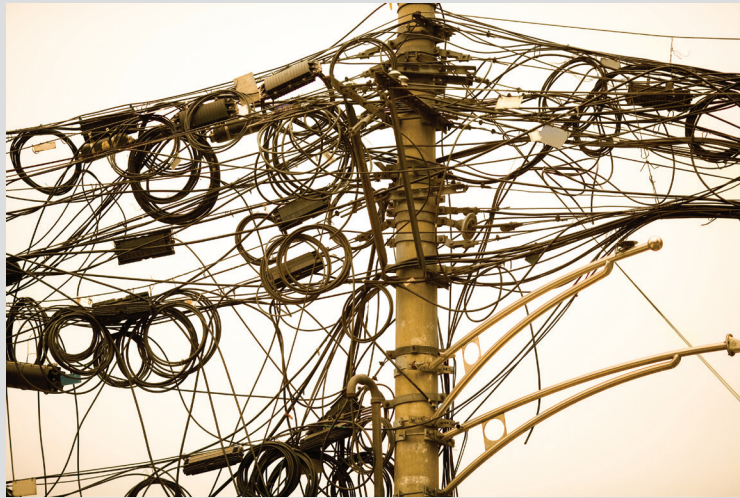
Sometimes our pasts can feel like a mass of stuff.

Think of a work occasion you've always remembered but perhaps are not terribly clear why. Write a letter to yourself from the person you were then, telling you all about it, including lots of details. Write it in the language that younger person might use.

Write a letter back to that younger-you, asking several questions about the story.

Write the younger-you's responses to the questions.

Write a few paragraphs more reflecting upon this process and what it has helped you understand. Write more letters if you are still left with queries.



Read to Learn

Bager-Charleson, S. (2014) *Doing Practice-based Research in Therapy: A reflexive approach*, London: Sage Publications.

Learning how to use critical self-reflection creatively when practising therapy is an important component of training. Bager-Charleson's book examines and explains the vital importance of this level of self-awareness in practice-based research. Starting with a clear introduction to the theory, practice and debates surrounding this type of research, the book then guides the reader step-by-step through the practicalities of the research process, encouraging them to reflect upon and evaluate their practice at each stage. It uses engaging case studies and real life examples and encourages ongoing personal development by introducing personal development planning (PDP) and lifelong learning. By demystifying the reflexive approach, this highly practical guide ensures that trainees and qualified therapists get the most, both professionally and personally, from their practice-based research.

Cook S. (2012) "'To actually *be* sociological": Autoethnography as an assessment and learning tool', *Journal of Sociology*, July 5, online (1440783312451780). Autoethnography writing is very similar to reflective practice writing. It enables practitioners and students to explore the relationship between their personal, lived experiences with wider social structures and forces, thus actively developing and engaging their sociological imagination. It can be used for assessment (see above for Brookfield's CIQ: Critical Incident Questionnaire, used for assessment and evaluation). This paper explains the autoethnography process, and examines knowledge and learning from the student's perspective. It concludes that the potential benefits for students, as identified by them, far outweigh the possible negatives.

Chapter 11: Reflective Writing and Team Development



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

Write the story of a time with a patient/student/service user/client/member of the public (depending on your profession), or a colleague. Write about a time when you felt close to them, and you had got through to them, perhaps despite ripples of difficulty.

Remember to include what you thought and felt, what you felt they thought and felt, and some details about what you heard (e.g. the quality of their voice), what you felt bodily (e.g. warmth of handshake), what you smelt or tasted perhaps, and some details you saw such as colours or particular facial or bodily expressions.

Reread.

Now imagine you are the person you've just written about, and had just read your account. Write as if you are that other person, responding to the account. Write yourself a letter as if from that person saying what they think and feel about how you have represented what happened.

Write your reply.

Write several sentences more, or notes, about what this makes you think and feel now.





Read to Learn

Price, B., Harrington, A. (2013) *Critical Writing and Thinking for Nursing Students*, 2nd Edition. London: Sage Publications.

A clear and practical guide. Price and Harrington also demonstrate how critical thinking and reflection can be transferred from the academic to the practical. This book is useful to any student.

Enskär, K. (2012) 'Being an Expert Nurse in Pediatric Oncology Care: Nurses' Descriptions in Narratives', *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing* 29(3): 151–160.

Sixty-six nurses working in pediatric oncology wrote narratives for this study, which concluded that when nurses are given possibilities for continuous education and reflection, and have a feeling of satisfaction at being able to fulfill their patients' or families' needs, this enhances their possibility to become experts and maintain expert competence. This is true for any profession.

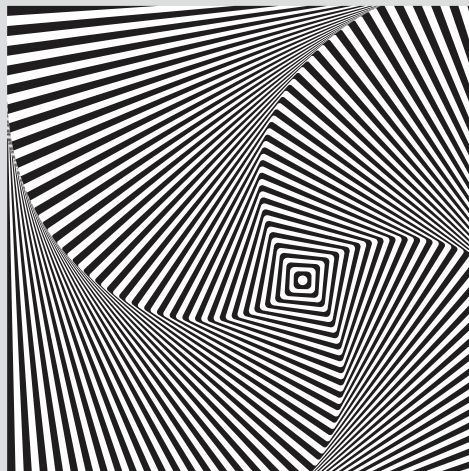
Chapter 12: Reflection on Reflection



Write to Learn

Start with 6 minutes of free writing as above.

Write to yourself in the future. Tell this self about your work life now: its joys and difficulties.



Write the reply from your older self, telling your present self about how it is in the future.

Allow this future self to give advice to your present self.

Write some more about how it felt to do this. And what you have gained from it.



Read to Learn

Bell, I., McGrane, B., Grunderson, J., Anderson, T. (2014) *This book is not required: an emotional and intellectual survival manual for students*, 4th Edition.
London: Sage Publications.

This book offers reflective skills to all students.