

## Self-Assessment Reflective Essay Checklist

Use this checklist to review your reflective essay before submission. Check each box to ensure you haven't missed key elements.

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### Content & Depth (The Most Important Section)

**Analysis vs. Description Balance** - ☐ Less than 40% of my essay describes what happened - ☐ More than 60% of my essay analyzes what it means - ☐ I explain WHY things matter, not just WHAT happened - ☐ I've avoided excessive storytelling without reflection

**Insight Quality** - ☐ My thesis states a specific lesson or insight (not generic) - ☐ I explain HOW my thinking changed, not just that it changed - ☐ My insights go beyond obvious observations - ☐ I've identified specific before/after differences in my behavior or beliefs

**Personal Growth** - ☐ I clearly show how I've changed or grown - ☐ I provide specific evidence of this transformation - ☐ I explain what I'll do differently in the future - ☐ I acknowledge ongoing learning (not claiming perfection)

**Honesty & Vulnerability** - ☐ I admit mistakes or failures honestly - ☐ I include uncomfortable emotions or thoughts - ☐ I avoid making myself sound artificially impressive - ☐ My reflection feels authentic, not manufactured

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### Structure & Organization

**Introduction** - ☐ Opens with a hook (vivid moment, question, or striking detail) - ☐ Provides brief context about the experience - ☐ Includes a clear thesis statement - ☐ Introduction is under 150 words

**Body Paragraphs** - ☐ Each paragraph has a clear focus/topic sentence - ☐ Paragraphs include: description + reflection + analysis - ☐ I use transitions to connect ideas smoothly - ☐ Each paragraph advances my thesis - ☐ Body makes up 70-80% of total essay length

**Conclusion** - ☐ Restates main insight in fresh language (not copy-paste) - ☐ Summarizes key growth briefly - ☐ Projects forward—explains future impact - ☐ Provides satisfying closure - ☐ Conclusion is 100-150 words

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### Writing Quality

**Specificity** - ☐ I use concrete details (names, moments, dialogue) - ☐ I avoid vague statements like "it was a good experience" - ☐ I include sensory details

when describing scenes - ☐ My examples are specific, not generic

**Language & Style** - ☐ I use first person (“I”) throughout - ☐ I employ reflective language (“I realized,” “Looking back,” “This revealed”) - ☐ I avoid overly formal or stiff academic language - ☐ My tone is thoughtful and introspective

**Clarity** - ☐ Every sentence has a clear purpose - ☐ I avoid unnecessary repetition - ☐ My ideas flow logically from one to the next - ☐ A reader unfamiliar with the experience can follow along

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## Common Mistakes to Avoid

**Check that you HAVEN’T done these:** - ☐ Written a narrative essay (all story, no analysis) - ☐ Used generic insights (“teamwork is important”) - ☐ Focused only on positive aspects (ignored challenges/failures) - ☐ Included too many different experiences (stayed focused on one) - ☐ Written in third person or passive voice - ☐ Made claims without supporting evidence - ☐ Ended abruptly without real conclusion - ☐ Introduced new information in the conclusion

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## Technical Requirements

**Formatting** - ☐ Meets required word count/page length - ☐ Follows assignment formatting guidelines (font, spacing, margins) - ☐ Includes required components (if specified by instructor)

**Grammar & Mechanics** - ☐ Proofread for spelling errors - ☐ Checked for grammar mistakes - ☐ Verified punctuation is correct - ☐ Ensured consistent verb tense (usually past for events, present for insights)

**Citations (if applicable)** - ☐ Cited any outside sources properly - ☐ Connected personal experience to course concepts (if required) - ☐ Formatted references correctly

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## Final Quality Check

**Read Your Essay Aloud** - ☐ Read entire essay out loud to catch awkward phrasing - ☐ Confirmed it sounds natural and authentic - ☐ Checked that it flows smoothly

**The Highlighter Test** - ☐ Highlighted every sentence that analyzes or reflects (not describes) - ☐ At least 60% of essay is highlighted - ☐ If less, revised to add more analysis

**The “So What?” Test** - ☐ Asked “so what?” after each major point - ☐ Explained significance, not just facts - ☐ Ensured every paragraph answers why it matters

**The Stranger Test** - ☐ Someone unfamiliar with the experience could understand it - ☐ The lesson/insight is clear without additional explanation - ☐ The growth is evident and specific

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## Scoring Guide

**25/25 checks:** Your essay is excellent—ready to submit!

**20-24 checks:** Strong essay with minor improvements needed

**15-19 checks:** Good foundation but needs significant revision

**Below 15 checks:** Major revisions required before submission

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## Before You Submit

- ☐ Saved file with correct naming convention
- ☐ Double-checked submission requirements
- ☐ Submitted to correct platform/location
- ☐ Met the deadline

**Final question:** Am I proud of this work? Does it represent my genuine learning and growth?

If yes—submit it. If no—revise until you can answer yes.

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**Pro Tip:** Return to this checklist during revision, not just at the end. Use it to catch issues early rather than after your essay is “finished.”