

# Differences between reflective and academic essays

Academic Essay	Reflective Essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory</li> <li>• Voice: Third person</li> <li>• Tense: Past tense</li> <li>• A thesis (line of argument) and a well organised structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory and personal experience</li> <li>• Voice: first person and third person</li> <li>• Tense: past, present and future</li> <li>• A thesis (line of argument) and a well organised structure</li> </ul>

A typical academic essay is always informed by sound research, is written in the third person and has a clear structure formed around a thesis statement. However, in a reflective essay you are encouraged to:

- Also use first person: for example: *I, me, he, or she*
- Only use second person who you are quoting someone who has used the word “*you*”
- Use examples from the real world (your personal history or examples)
- Use examples of verbatim language that will require specific punctuation
- Place your learning in a potential future, for example “Next time...” and “In the future...”

A traditional essay paragraph	A reflective essay paragraph
<p>A key principle of cognitive behavioural theory is to change “faulty assumptions and beliefs” (Corey, 2005, p. 304). An example of faulty thinking would be if a child felt he or she had no right to be heard. This could lead to a lifetime of being shy and anxious and avoiding parties and social functions. If this behaviour continued into adulthood, this behaviour would be maladaptive and may result in unhelpful outcomes (Boden et al., 2012). As an adult and potential client it would be useful to reframe this understanding of social situations (Boyes, 2013).</p>	<p>A key principle of cognitive behavioural theory is to change “faulty assumptions and beliefs” (Corey, 2005, p. 304). As a <u>child I thought and felt that I</u> should be seen and not heard. This led to a lifetime of being shy and anxious around people. Consequently <u>I avoided</u> parties and social functions. According to Boden et al. (2012) maladaptive thinking tends to result in unhelpful behaviours. In my case, what <u>I learned in my childhood</u> led me to behave in ways which have been and continue to be socially unhelpful. As an <u>adult I want to be a better</u> role model to my children. <u>I realise I have been developing</u> social anxiety and cognitive based therapy may be worthwhile for me. Boyes (2013) has suggested that reframing situations may be helpful and this is what <u>I would like to</u> learn to do.</p>

Notice the structure of the paragraph above. The student has:

- ✓ Provided a topic sentence which addresses the focus of the paragraph
- ✓ Provided details and specific examples from their experience including feelings, thoughts, observations
- ✓ Created links from their experience to course concepts and theories