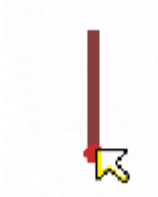




Hi graduate friends,



Thinking and reflection play a crucial part in the learning process. As a grad student, after you've gained a basic understanding of things, you probably have to go one step deeper to *apply, analyze, evaluate*, and even *create* content. These are referred to as *higher order thinking skills* (Anderson et al., 2001). But do you always remember to reflect? How and when do you do so? It's a good idea to consider formalizing or giving some structure to your reflection process. One of the best ways to do so can be through

reflective journal writing (Asselin, 2011).

But what is a reflective journal? Well, I like to think of it as an academic diary; a safe and informal space in which you can complain or get excited about what you read in an article, hear in class, see in a documentary, etc. Once you get comfortable with writing, the opportunity arises to get into those higher order thinking skills. For example, you can make connections and comparisons between what you're learning, ask questions and critique what you've heard, consider the pros and cons of an approach, make judgments, and so on and so forth.

Ok so I know that may sound intense right now. At this stage, just consider starting a reflective journal to simply write about your academic thoughts, however trivial or deep they may be. Research shows that if you stick to writing a reflective journal, over time and with experience, it's highly likely that you'll use more and more higher order thinking skills (Ennis, 2006). With that in mind, write freely, and when you do think of something deeper, you'll know it's important to hold on to it and start exploring it in your journal. Believe me, you'll end up writing some amazing stuff and I guarantee you'll refer back to your reflective journal many times throughout your academic journey.



Best,

**Aldean Ellis (he/him), from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!**

*GRADUpdATE is a monthly e-newsletter dedicated to helping students succeed in graduate school. This information is provided by Learning Development & Success, Room 4100, Western Student Services Building, Western University, Canada.*

**Reference:**

Anderson, Krathwohl, D. R., & Bloom, B. S. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives* (Complete ed.). Longman.

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