



How To Write A Reflection On Group Work Essay

By Chris Drew (PhD) / December 17, 2022

Here are the exact steps you need to follow for a reflection on group work essay.

1. Explain what Reflection Is
2. Explore the benefits of group work
3. Explore the challenges group
4. Give examples of the benefits and challenges your group faced
5. Discuss how your group handled your challenges
6. Discuss what you will do differently next time
7. Edit!

Do you have to reflect on how your group work project went?

This is a super common essay that teachers assign. So, let's have a look at how you can go about writing a superb reflection on your group work project that should get great grades.

The essay structure I outline below takes the funnel approach to essay writing: it starts broad and general, then zooms in on your specific group's situation.



Disclaimer: Make sure you check with your teacher to see if this is a good style to use for your essay. Take a draft to your teacher to get their feedback on whether it's what they're looking for!

This is a 6-step essay (the 7th step is editing!). Here's a general rule for how much depth to go into depending on your word count:

- 1500 word essay – one paragraph for each step, plus a paragraph each for the [introduction and conclusion](#);
- 3000 word essay – two paragraphs for each step, plus a paragraph each for the introduction and conclusion;
- 300 – 500 word essay – one or two sentences for each step.

Adjust this [essay plan](#) depending on your teacher's requirements and remember to always ask your teacher, a classmate or a professional tutor to review the piece before submitting.

Here's the steps I'll outline for you in this advice article:



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Step 1. Explain What 'Reflection' Is

You might have heard that you need to define your terms in essays. Well, the most important term in this essay is 'reflection'.

So, let's have a look at what reflection is...

[Reflection](#) is the process of:

1. Pausing and looking back at what has just happened; then
2. Thinking about how you can get better next time.



Reflection is encouraged in most professions because it's believed that reflection helps you to become better at your job – we could say 'reflection makes you a better practitioner'.

Think about it: let's say you did a speech in front of a crowd. Then, you looked at video footage of that speech and realised you said 'um' and 'ah' too many times. Next time, you're going to focus on not saying 'um' so that you'll do a better job next time, right?

Well, that's reflection: thinking about what happened and how you can do better next time.

It's really important that you do *both* of the above two points in your essay. You can't just say what happened. You *need to say* how you will do better next time in order to get a top grade on this group work reflection essay.

Scholarly Sources To Cite For Step 1

Okay, so you have a good general idea of what reflection is. Now, what [scholarly sources](#) should you use when explaining reflection? Below, I'm going to give you two basic sources that would usually be enough for an undergraduate essay. I'll also suggest two more sources for further reading if you really want to shine!

I recommend these two sources to cite when explaining what reflective practice is and how it occurs. They are two of the central sources on reflective practice:

1. **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle** – This is the most famous model of reflection. [According to Gibbs](#), you can reflect on your actions through a 6-step process. Here's the process:



1. Describe what happened during the group work process
2. Explain how you felt during the group work process
3. Look at the good and bad aspects of the group work process
4. What were some of the things that got in the way of success? What were some things that helped you succeed?
5. What could you have done differently to improve the situation?
6. Action plan. What are you going to do next time to make the group work process better?

2. **Rolfe's Reflective Practice Framework** – this is an easier and more straightforward reflection model, with [these three elements](#):

1. What? Explain what happened
2. So What? Explain what you learned
3. Now What? What can I do next time to make the group work process better?

Possible Sources:

Bassot, B. (2015). *The reflective practice guide: An interdisciplinary approach to critical reflection*. Routledge.

Brock, A. (2014). What is reflection and reflective practice?. In *The Early Years Reflective Practice Handbook* (pp. 25-39). Routledge.

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

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: a user's guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Extension Sources For Top Students



Now, if you want to go deeper and really show off your knowledge, have a look at these two scholars:

1. John Dewey – the first major scholar to come up with the idea of reflective practice
2. Donald Schön – technical rationality, reflection *in* action vs. reflection *on* action

Step 2. Explore The General Benefits Of Group Work For Learning

Once you have given an explanation of what group work is (and hopefully cited Gibbs, Rolfe, Dewey or Schon), I recommend digging into the benefits of group work for your own learning.

The teacher gave you a group work task for a reason: what is that reason?

You'll need to explain the reasons group work is beneficial for you. This will show your teacher that you understand what group work is supposed to achieve. Here's some ideas:

- **Multiple Perspectives.** Group work helps you to see things from other people's perspectives. If you did the task on your own, you might not have thought of some of the ideas that your team members contributed to the project.
- **Contribution of Unique Skills.** Each team member might have a different set of skills they can bring to the table. You can explain how groups can make the most of different team members' strengths to make the final contribution as good as it can be. For example, one team member might be good at IT and might be able to put together a strong final presentation,



while another member might be a pro at researching using google scholar so they got the task of doing the initial scholarly research.

- **Improved Communication Skills.** Group work projects help you to work on your communication skills. Communication skills required in group work projects include speaking in turn, speaking up when you have ideas, actively listening to other team members' contributions, and crucially making compromises for the good of the team.
- **Learn to Manage Workplace Conflict.** Lastly, your teachers often assign you group work tasks so you can learn to manage conflict and disagreement. You'll come across this a whole lot in the workplace, so your teachers want you to have some experience being professional while handling disagreements.

You might be able to add more ideas to this list, or you might just want to select one or two from that list to write about depending on the length requirements for the essay.

Scholarly Sources For Step 3

Make sure you provide citations for these points above. You might want to use [google scholar](#) or google books and type in 'Benefits of group work' to find some quality scholarly sources to cite.

Step 3. Explore The General Challenges Group Work Can Cause

Step 3 is the mirror image of Step 2. For this step, explore the challenges

posed by group work.



Students are usually pretty good at this step because you can usually think of some aspects of group work that made you anxious or frustrated. Here are a few common challenges that group work causes:

- **Time Consuming.** You need to organize meetups and often can't move onto the next component of the project until everyone has agreed to move on. When working on your own you can just crack on and get it done. So, team work often takes a lot of time and requires significant pre-planning so you don't miss your submission deadlines!
- **Learning Style Conflicts.** Different people learn in different ways. Some of us like to get everything done at the last minute or are not very meticulous in our writing. Others of us are very organized and detailed and get anxious when things don't go exactly how we expect. This leads to conflict and frustration in a group work setting.
- **Free Loaders.** Usually in a group work project there's people who do more work than others. The issue of free loaders is always going to be a challenge in group work, and you can discuss in this section how ensuring individual accountability to the group is a common group work issue.
- **Communication Breakdown.** This is one especially for online students. It's often the case that you email team members your ideas or to ask them to reply by a deadline and you don't hear back from them. Regular communication is an important part of group work, yet sometimes your team members will let you down on this part.

As with Step 3, consider adding more points to this list if you need to, or selecting one or two if your essay is only a short one.

8 Pros And Cons Of Group Work At University



Pros of Group Work

1. Multiple Perspectives. Members of your team will have different perspectives to bring to the table. Embrace team brainstorming to bring in more ideas than you would on your own.

2. Contribution of Unique Skills. Each of your team members will have different skills. Embrace your IT-obsessed team member's computer skills; embrace the organizer's skills for keeping the group on track, and embrace the strongest writer's editing skills to get the best out of your group.

3. Improved Communication Skills. Use group work to learn how to communicate more effectively. Focus on active listening and asking questions that will prompt your team members to expand on their ideas.

4. Learn to Manage Workplace Conflict. In the workforce you're not

Cons of Group Work

1. Time-Consuming. You can get on with an individual task at your own pace, but groups need to arrange meet-ups and set deadlines to function effectively. This is time-consuming and requires pre-planning.

2. Learning Style Conflicts. Some of your team members will want to get everything done at once; others will procrastinate frequently. You might also have conflicts in strategic directions depending on your different approaches to learning.

3. Free Loaders. Many groups struggle with people who don't carry their own weight. You need to ensure you delegate tasks to the lazy group members and be stern with them about sticking to the deadlines they agreed upon.

4. Communication Breakdown. It can be hard to get group members all

Pros of Group Work

Cons of Group Work



going to get along with your colleagues. Use group work at university to learn how to deal with difficult team members calmly and professionally.

on the same page. Members don't rely to questions, get anxiety and shut down, or get busy with their own lives. It's important every team member is ready and available for ongoing communication with the group.

Scholarly Sources For Step 3

You'll probably find you can cite the same scholarly sources for both steps 2 and 3 because if a source discusses the benefits of group work it'll probably also discuss the challenges.

Step 4. Explore The Specific Benefits And Challenges Your Group Faced

Step 4 is where you zoom in on your group's specific challenges. Have a think: what were the issues you really struggled with as a group?

- Was one team member absent for a few of the group meetings?
- Did the group have to change some deadlines due to lack of time?
- Were there any specific disagreements you had to work through?
- Did a group member drop out of the group part way through?
- Were there any communication break downs?

Feel free to also mention some things your group did really well. Have a think

about these examples:



- Was one member of the group really good at organizing you all?
- Did you make some good professional relationships?
- Did a group member help you to see something from an entirely new perspective?
- Did working in a group help you to feel like you weren't lost and alone in the process of completing the group work component of your course?

Here, because you're talking about your own perspectives, it's usually okay to use first person language (but check with your teacher). You are also talking about your own point of view so citations might not be quite as necessary, but it's still a good idea to add in one or two citations – perhaps to the sources you cited in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5. Discuss How Your Group Managed Your Challenges

Step 5 is where you can explore how you worked to overcome some of the challenges you mentioned in Step 4.

So, have a think:

- Did your group make any changes part way through the project to address some challenges you faced?
- Did you set roles or delegate tasks to help ensure the group work process went smoothly?



- Did you contact your teacher at any point for advice on how to progress in the group work scenario?
- Did you use technology such as Google Docs or Facebook Messenger to help you to collaborate more effectively as a team?

In this step, you should be showing how your team was proactive in reflecting on your group work progress and making changes throughout the process to ensure it ran as smoothly as possible. This act of making little changes throughout the group work process is what's called 'Reflection in Action' (Schön, 2017).

Scholarly Source For Step 5

Schön, D. A. (2017). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Routledge.

Step 6. Conclude By Exploring What You Will Do Differently Next Time

Step 6 is the most important step, and the one far too many students skip. For Step 6, you need to show how you not only *reflected on what happened* but also are able to use that reflection for personal growth into the future.

This is the heart and soul of your piece: here, you're tying everything together and showing why reflection is so important!

This is the ['action plan' step in Gibbs' cycle](#) (you might want to cite Gibbs in this section!).

For Step 6, make some suggestions about how (based on your reflection) you now have some takeaway tips that you'll bring forward to improve your group work skills next time. Here's some ideas:



- Will you work harder next time to set deadlines in advance?
- Will you ensure you [set clearer group roles](#) next time to ensure the process runs more smoothly?
- Will you use a different type of technology (such as Google Docs) to ensure group communication goes more smoothly?
- Will you make sure you ask for help from your teacher earlier on in the process when you face challenges?
- Will you try harder to see things from everyone's perspectives so there's less conflict?

This step will be personalized based upon your own group work challenges and how you felt about the group work process. Even if you think your group worked really well together, I recommend you still come up with one or two ideas for continual improvement. Your teacher will want to see that you used reflection to strive for continual self-improvement.

Scholarly Source For Step 6

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

Step 7. Edit!



Okay, you've got the nuts and bolts of the assessment put together now! Next, all you've got to do is write up the introduction and conclusion then edit the piece to make sure you keep growing your grades.

Here's a few important suggestions for this last point:

- You should always write your introduction and conclusion last. They will be easier to write now that you've completed the main 'body' of the essay;
- Use my [5-step I.N.T.R.O method](#) to write your introduction;
- Use my [5 C's Conclusion method](#) to write your conclusion;
- Use my [5 tips for editing an essay](#) to edit it;
- Use the [ProWritingAid](#) app to get advice on how to improve your grammar and spelling. Make sure to also use the report on sentence length. It finds sentences that are too long and gives you advice on how to shorten them – such a good strategy for improving [evaluative essay](#) quality!
- Make sure you contact your teacher and ask for a one-to-one tutorial to go through the piece before submitting. This article only gives general advice, and you might need to make changes based upon the specific essay requirements that your teacher has provided.

Summary

That's it! 7 steps to writing a quality group work reflection essay. I hope you found it useful. If you liked this post and want more clear and specific advice on writing great essays, I recommend signing up to my personal tutor mailing list.

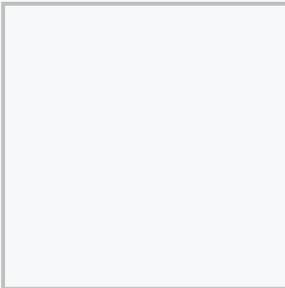
Let's sum up with those 7 steps one last time:



1. Explain what 'Reflection' Is
2. Explore the benefits of group work for learning
3. Explore the challenges of group work for learning
4. Explore the specific benefits and challenges your group faced
5. Discuss how your group managed your challenges
6. Conclude by exploring what you will do differently next time
7. Edit!

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Dr. Chris Drew is the founder of the Helpful Professor. He holds a PhD in education and has published over 20 articles in scholarly journals. He is the former editor of the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education.



2 Thoughts On “How To Write A Reflection On Group Work Essay”

ANONYMOUS

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 2:24 AM

Great instructions on writing a reflection essay. I would not change anything.

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CHRIS DREW, PHD

APRIL 23, 2020 AT 5:29 PM

Thanks so much for your feedback! I really appreciate it. – Chris.

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