One type of writing that is common in many university courses is called the comment paper. A special kind of comment paper is the reflection paper. Although some research may be required for this type of paper, the main purpose of this type of paper is to give your opinions, views, or thoughts about something, such as a book that you have read or a life experience that you have had.

A comment paper or reflection paper is usually written in the form of an essay. If you need to review the parts of an essay, see the on-line module on the “Parts of an Essay.”

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**Checking Your Comprehension**

*Look back over the previous information to find the answers to these questions:*

1. What is a comment paper?
2. What is a reflection paper?
3. What is the basic form of a comment paper or a reflection paper?

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**COMMENT PAPER**

The purpose of a comment paper is to show what you thought about an assigned reading (or readings), video, or guest presentation in a creative, critical, sceptical or otherwise thoughtful manner. Thus, you should not simply summarise an assigned reading (or readings), video, or guest lecture. Rather, you should do one (or more) of the following:

- Comment on something you have read. Explain why you agree or disagree with it.
- Show how something that you have studied relates to your own experience.
- Describe your emotional reaction to something you have studied, read, heard, viewed, etc.
- Contrast two points of view that you have studied. Explain why you favour one over the other.
- Explain how something that you have read, listened to, viewed, etc. could be improved. Think about missing information, bias, faulty procedure or method, etc.

The structure of a comment paper usually follows this format:

- After the introduction, give a brief discussion of the text, performance, video, etc. that you are commenting on. Mention only the main points that you will be discussing in your essay. Do not give a complete summary of the text, video, etc.
- Next, give your own ideas, based on reasons or facts, related to each point that you have raised.
- If you disagree with the points raised in the original document, video, talk, etc., you may wish to use an argument format in your comment paper. See the handout entitled “Arguing a Point.”
REFLECTION PAPER

A special kind of comment paper is the reflection paper. In a reflection paper, you write about your own personal experiences and analyze them.

For example, in a sociology course, you may be studying the problems faced by newcomers to Canada. If you are a newcomer, you may discuss your own experiences as a newcomer and relate these experiences to problems that you studied in the course. This type of paper may require some research. You may need to learn about the subject by reading books and articles, etc., and then use your own experiences as examples.

Since this type of paper is also structured as an essay, be sure that you are comfortable with the format for an essay.

The structure of a reflection paper usually follows this format:

- After the introduction, give a brief discussion of the theory, model, etc. that you are applying to your personal experience. This should be detailed and specific but not exceed roughly one quarter of the length of the paper. Mention only the main points that you will be discussing in your essay.
- Next, briefly explain the method you are using to gather data. For example, did you keep a journal? Did you keep records?
- Then summarise the situation you experienced before you applied the theory or model.
- Follow this by summarising any changes that you noted after using the theory or the model.
- Finally, comment on what you have learned from this experience and generalise your findings to a broader set of circumstances.

For more information about writing comment or reflection papers, visit: http://www.ilir.uiuc.edu/courses/lir567/567%20lir%20guidelines.pdf

ANALYSIS

A comment paper requires analysis. It is not enough to summarise a book or to narrate an event from your life. You need to analyse the meaning of the book or the event and explain its significance. A large part of your paper should contain analysis.
Final Quiz

Choose the best answer for each of the following ten questions.

1. Which of the following might be the subject of a comment paper?
   a. Movie    b. music album    c. magazine    d. all of the above

2. The basic form of a comment paper is
   a. like a letter to the editor    b. like a report
   b. like an essay    d. like a case study

3. In a comment paper it is often possible to use
   a. Visuals    b. Arguments    c. tables    d. none of the above

4. In a comment paper, you may
   a. Contrast    b. Describe    c. explain    d. all of these

5. In a reflection paper, you normally
   a. apply a theory or a model to a life experience.
   b. contrast two theories.
   c. contrast two models.
   d. develop a new theory or model.

6. The first part of a reflection paper should
   a. present a life experience    b. present an example
   b. present a theory or model    d. present a problem

7. Later in a reflection paper there should be
   a. the description of a life experience.
   b. the description of a theory or model.
   c. the description of a problem.
   d. the description of a contrast between a model and an experience.

8. A reflection paper should
   a. show growth or development in the writer.
   b. show how theory plus experience can contribute to learning.
   c. give a theoretical foundation for experience.
   d. (all of the above)

9. Which of the following is probably not a good topic for a reflection paper?
   a. Meditation    b. Movies    c. diet    d. study habits

10. Analysis is an important part of
    a. a comment paper.    b. a reflection paper.
    b. neither of these.    d. both of these.