



Stronger Reasoning & Decision Skills: Training Tools & Techniques

A REFLECTIVE LOG

Designed for use by anyone who wants to focus on improving their thinking.

WHY: – Critical thinking is vital to your success in life and work. It's worth developing strong thinking skills. This critical thinking tool is intended to give structure and focus to journaling assignments made by to assist students or trainees to integrate their learning experiences through reflective writing. The focus of the journaling is a reflection on one's own thinking behavior (metacognitive reflection). This version of the exercise, aimed at the undergraduate or novice professional, is easily adapted for use in other populations. Use the Reflective Log to coach trainee' self-monitoring and self-correction skills.

HOW: Each week focus on a particular question for how it elicits information to assist your knowledge and problem solving. Using a log book or ledger book, keep a legibly handwritten weekly log beginning in WEEK 2 and continuing through WEEK 10. Journal your thoughts about 'Thinking' and "Thinking process". Feel free to make pictures, symbols, concept maps, decision trees, or diagrams if helpful, in organizing your ideas. Cross out things as you see fit, but do not erase anything. The process and progress of your interpretations, analyses, inferences, evaluations, and explanations will be manifest in these preliminary notes and drawings. Since this log is about reflecting on thinking, those preliminary writings are valuable markers against which you can evaluate the progress and development of your ideas. Each week, when your thinking becomes more developed, compose at least two *final paragraphs* for that week.

WHAT: Examine and evaluate your ideas and your thinking process. Each week's two *final paragraphs* should relate striking insights (one positive and one a self-critique) about your own thinking. What is striking for you might not be striking for someone else. It is YOUR experience and your reflection that this log records. Regrettable though it may be, the most fruitful learning experiences are often negative ones. In responding to the week's question you should first do a self-critique and examine experiences of weak, poor, flawed, fallacious, uncritical, or erroneous thinking. On the other hand, since it takes a focus on quality to appreciate and to seek excellence, the second paragraph should be about a strong, correct, high quality experience that is striking to you because of how good the scientific or critical thinking was. In these final paragraphs, include a date and a description of the event or circumstance your reflection and an evaluation of the thinking involved. Provide your reasons for how you determined the quality of the thinking being discussed.

QUESTIONS FOR EACH WEEK

(W1: This week, discuss this exercise with the trainer who is providing this opportunity, and get ready to do it well. Agree on whether your journaling entries are a private exercise or one you will share with your trainer.)

W2: Why do you think that? ASK: Another student who is not in this course

W3: Seriously, how good is the evidence for that? ASK: Anyone, not yourself

W4: What else did you consider? ASK: Someone who has completed college

W5: Exactly why do you say that's the problem? ASK: Your best friend

W6: What does making this decision imply? ASK: Yourself

W7: How sound is the reason they're giving? ASK: Yourself, relative to TV commercial

W8: What's really the problem here? ASK: A professor or trainer

W9: What evidence would disconfirm our view? ASK: Someone who agrees with you.

W10: What did I learn about my own thinking? ASK: Yourself

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