


Welcome to this video on reflective writing, and in particular, how to connect personal experience with research literature. My name is Theresa Bell, and I work in the Writing Centre at RRU.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL LANDS

Royal Roads University acknowledges that the campus is located on the traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) ancestors and families who have lived here for thousands of years.

This land has been part of the fabric of the life of Indigenous communities long before Hatley Castle was built, and it will be long into the future. It is with gratitude that we now learn and work here, where the past, present and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff come together.

 Hay'sxw'qa si'em!



Royal Roads University is located on the traditional lands of the Xwsepsum and Lekwungen ancestors and their families who have lived here for thousands of years. I'm grateful for the opportunity to connect with you here. Together, we can continue the history of people coming together to learn from one another on these traditional lands.

## Reflective writing and paragraphs

### A body paragraph:

Is a series of sentences that are connected or related.

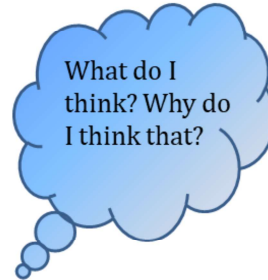


Focuses on one topic.



Paragraphs

Demonstrates your critical thinking on a topic.



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Reflective writing typically asks writers to think about their own life experiences and connect them to course subject material. For example, you might be connecting a theory with your personal experiences.

Connections between personal experience and the research literature are usually communicated in body paragraphs. As this slide shows, an academic paragraph is a series of sentences that are connected and that focus on one topic. Those sentences are your opportunity to demonstrate your critical thinking on the topic.

## What is critical thinking?

“Disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence” (“Critical thinking”, n.d.-a, para. 1).

“The process of analysing information in an objective way, in order to make a judgement about it” (“Critical thinking”, n.d.-b, para. 1).



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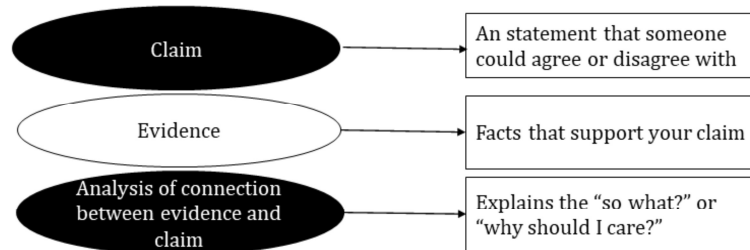
Demonstrating your critical thinking on a topic not only involves explaining what you think, but also why you have that point of view. You can demonstrate your critical thinking by telling the story of your argument and why that story is correct or convincing. One of the main questions you'll be answering is "why?". For example, why do you know your position is true? Why is your position more convincing than other points of view?

### References

Critical thinking. (n.d.-a). In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/critical+thinking>

Critical thinking. (n.d.-b). In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/learner/critical-thinking>

## Persuasive arguments



Your arguments will persuade readers through the expression of your critical thinking on the topic.



Here's a model in the form of a sandwich cookie for creating persuasive arguments. The top cookie is the claim, which is a statement someone could agree or disagree with. The evidence supports the claim, and in a reflective essay, evidence could come from your experiences as well as the research literature. Finally, the analysis explains the connection between the evidence and the claim, and shows the reader why those connections are important. Those three pieces together will help you demonstrate your critical thinking skills, and in doing so, you'll create a persuasive argument.

## Claim



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### Claim:

X restaurant is the best place to go for breakfast because the restaurant consistently provides delicious and reasonably-priced food.

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Let's look at those three elements a little more closely. In my example, I'm making an argument that a specific restaurant is the best place to go for breakfast and I've identified two specific reasons: the food is consistently delicious and reasonably priced. With that starting point, I need to show my reader how I know the statement is true.

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## Evidence



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### **Evidence:**

- How do you know the claim is true?
- What facts can you provide to support the claim, including those gathered from your personal experience?
- What evidence **best** supports the argument?

### **Sources of evidence:**

- Personal experience
- Formal reviews by professional food writers
- Informal reviews (e.g., blogs)
- Social media reviews/postings (e.g., Yelp, Facebook)

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I'm writing a reflective essay, so I can draw on my personal experience as well as other evidence to support my claim. Since I'm talking about this restaurant and how it consistently provides delicious and well-priced food, I could talk about my own experiences of going to the restaurant for breakfast. I could also look at other sources of information that demonstrate my experience wasn't unique, such as reviews and social media postings, that demonstrate the consistency of the restaurant's excellent and affordable food.

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# Analysis

How do you connect the evidence to the claim? After reading your analysis, your reader should understand:

- Why you choose that specific evidence.
- How the evidence supports the claim.
- How the evidence from your personal experience connects to scholarly research.

**For example:**

<b>A. Discuss your experience</b>  <b>By applying</b>	<b>Research findings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal reviews by professional food writers</li><li>• Informal reviews (e.g., blogs)</li><li>• Social media reviews/postings (e.g., Yelp, Facebook)</li></ul>	<b>B. Discuss research findings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal reviews by professional food writers</li><li>• Informal reviews (e.g., blogs)</li><li>• Social media reviews/postings (e.g., Yelp, Facebook)</li></ul> <b>By applying</b>	<b>Your experience</b> 
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The analysis is where you show your reader the connections you're making between the claim and the evidence. For example, I could tell my reader that I had a delicious and memorable breakfast at the restaurant two years ago, but in order to show that the restaurant's food is consistently excellent and well-priced, I need a broader range of evidence to show that my experience wasn't unique. Drawing data from online reviews, whether formal or informal, would allow me to demonstrate that range, and in doing so, connect my personal experience with a wider body of knowledge.

When connecting personal experience with research literature, try thinking of the connection in one of two ways: a) explain the personal experience by the research findings – in this case, the fact that I had a terrific breakfast at the restaurant is explained by the number of excellent reviews for the restaurant; or b) discuss the research findings by applying your personal experience, such as reading numerous positive reviews of a restaurant and then having a personal experience where everything mentioned in the reviews is part of the experience.

Those connections also apply when students are writing reflective works that connect personal experience and information from the research literature. For example, an author's experience of a conflict at work could be explained by a theory provided in the research literature; conversely, a theory presented in the research literature could be discussed through the application of the author's experience of a workplace conflict. Both the personal experience and the information from the research literature are essential, and they work together to demonstrate the author's critical thinking on the topic.

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## Resources

- [Reflective Writing](#)
- [“Building Persuasive Arguments”](#)
- “Writing an Academic Paragraph”: 19:35 video via [Paragraphs](#)
- [“Finalize Your Document Plan”](#)
- [“Plan Writing with PowerPoint”](#)
- [“Body Paragraph Checklist”](#)



There's lots of information on the Writing Centre website to help you with creating strong arguments that draw on both your personal experience and the research literature to demonstrate your critical thinking to your reader. If you're a Royal Roads student, please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, and the final slide of this presentation gives you options for how you can reach us.

## Questions?



[Writing Centre Website](#)



[Book an Appointment](#)



[WriteAnswers](#) (searchable  
FAQs and contact point)

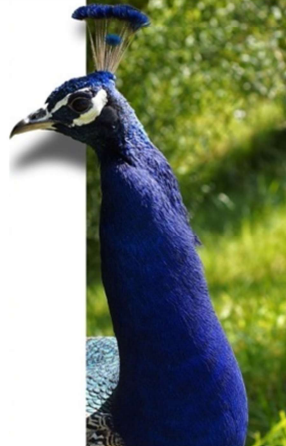


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