

Journals, Reflection, and Learning

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A journal is a crucible for processing the raw material of experience in order to integrate it with existing knowledge and create new meaning. Among the many purposes for journal writing are the following: to break habitual ways of thinking; enhance the development of reflective judgment and metacognition; increase awareness of tacit knowledge; facilitate self-exploration and personal growth; and work out solutions to problems (Andrusyszyn and Davie 1997; Mitchell and Coltrinari 2001; Moon 1999). Moon (1999) and Carroll (1994) discuss theories and research that support a number of assumptions about [learning](#) from journals:

- . Articulating connections between new and existing knowledge improves learning.
- . Writing about learning is a way of demonstrating what has been learned.
- . Journal writing accentuates favorable learning conditions—it demands time and space for reflection, encourages independent thought and ownership, enables expression of

feelings, and provides a place to work with ill-structured problems.

. Reflection encourages deep rather than surface learning.

English and Gillen (2001) report a dearth of research on the effectiveness of journal writing in adult education, although a few studies have demonstrated changes in thinking ([Jasper 1999](#)); more fluency in writing and language ([Myers 2001](#)); increased quality of group discussion and course performance (Kember et al. 1999; Parkyn 1999); and, in health care settings, better integration of learning and clinical practice (Jasper 1999). Journals are considered an effective way to socialize learners to academic discourse and institutional culture (Garland 1999; Myers 2001) and enhance the learning of Eng...

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