

Chapter 6: Cover Letters and Reflective Essays

If you'll recall, your final Presentation Portfolio will include 3 documents: two (2) of your best essays--revised, edited, and proofread--and a **cover letter or reflective essay**. The choice of whether you write a cover letter or reflective essay will be your instructor's. Pay attention to what your instructor decides in this regard.

Cover letters and essays differ from one another in their format. However, both pieces are similar in that they require you to share with your readers **the thinking process** that led you to make the writing/revision **choices** you did.

The cover letter/reflective essay will introduce your portfolio readers to who you are as a writer, as well as introduce the two (2) essays you have included in your portfolio. This is a very important document for a number of reasons. Firstly, this document will be the basis of your reader's first impression of you and your writing, and, secondly, often, when readers are undecided about a placement for a portfolio after reading the two essays, they will use the cover letter/reflective essay as the determining piece of evidence to make the decision.

Although this document will be written near the end of the semester, do not put it off until the last minute! The cover letter or reflective essay needs to demonstrate, in its construction and content, many of the things you have learned over the course of the semester.

Much like the essays you will include in your portfolio, you will make the major decisions about what to include in your cover letter, and we don't want to prescribe exactly how you should go about constructing your cover letter or reflective essay. You can get ideas about what you might like to do by looking at the samples we've included in this Guide. The most successful cover letters allow readers to get an authentic glimpse of the writer and what they have learned about writing. Be honest, professional, descriptive, and persuasive as you write this self-analysis. When you are able, you should refer to specific instances or situations you encountered during the semester to provide evidence for what you claim in the cover letter.

In general, the cover letter should do a couple of things: Introduce who you are as a writer and give your readers some concrete, specific details about how you went about revising (improving) your essays this semester. This second feature-- **sharing with us the strategies or approaches you used in order to make your writing better**—is especially important. We need to know you know how to improve your writing, and we want examples of what you did to improve it. (What types of changes did you make, and why?)

On the next page are some questions that may help you figure out what to include in your cover letter. You may want to spend some time freewriting about these topics; doing so could help you generate some rough-draft material (which you will need to spruce up, of course) for your cover letter. **Keep in mind, though, that these questions are just designed to get you started.** They are not a checklist for putting together the perfect cover letter.

- *Introduce who you are as a writer:*
 - How have you grown as a writer over the past sixteen weeks? Were there any important instances from your experience in this writing class that have helped you grow as a writer or learn something new and significant about writing?
 - Divide your writing life into a few stages or periods, and then ask yourself what characterizes each of those periods, and see if you can find any themes that emerge, or if you can identify how you have progressed in your learning and abilities as a writer.
 - What kinds of writing have you done in your past and what kinds do you do now? Remember, there are many more kinds of writing than just the stuff you've done for school. Making a list of things-to-do is writing and so is graffiti. Consider what is different about your experiences with different kinds of writing.
 - Who are the people you have written for in your lifetime (not just teachers). What effects have these different audiences had on your feelings towards writing or the quality of the writing itself? Which audiences helped you the most, or made the writing the easiest to complete, and which audiences made it difficult to write or held you back from writing in some way?
 - Think about the process or procedure you go through when you sit down to write and try to isolate, or make a list, of the specific steps you go through. Which of these steps gives you the most trouble? Which of these steps gives you the most satisfaction? Why?
 - What kinds of feedback have you received on your writing, in this class and in the past, and not just from teachers? What effects did this feedback have on you or your writing?
 - What problems, stuck points, or breakthroughs have you had as a writer? What hardest for you about writing, or what gets in the way the most for you as a writer? Where have you made the greatest improvements as a writer? Is there anything you have learned that has helped you see writing in a new and more positive way?
 - What are some of the ideas you had about writing that have changed? These could be myths you used to have about writing, such as, good writing equals good grammar, and how has changing these ideas helped you develop as a writer?

- *Discuss what you did to improve your essays: what strategies you used, what types of changes you made:*

Often, this is the part of the cover letter that is given the least amount of detail and time, but it is an essential part of the cover letter because your reflections about the essays you have included gives readers a rare glimpse into your mind and intentions as a writer. You will include two (2) essays in your portfolio. You'll want to freewrite about your writing and revision process for each essay, and then take the best ideas from that freewriting and shape it into more polished prose. **Again, this is a chance to show the portfolio readers that you know how to revise; you know how to improve your writing. Specific details will help you make your case here.**

- What was your main point in each of the essays? Your main point is different than your topic or subject matter: your main point is the idea or argument you'd like readers to take away regarding the subject or topic, the central message you'd like them to grasp, or the controlling idea that gives the topic or subject matter a reason to be written, and read.
- What did you like best about each of the essays? What paragraphs, ideas, anecdotes, examples, or even words, phrases, or sentences do you like best because they are particularly effective in getting your point or purpose across to readers?
- In what ways have you anticipated the needs and wants of readers? This portfolio is meant to be shared with readers; it is not private writing, so in what ways have you attempted to address the needs and wants of readers?
- How did you decide to organize your essays? Does the beginning serve as a good way to bring readers into the essay? Do the middle parts, the body of the essay, lead readers where they need to go, give them the kinds of information they need to grasp and understand your main point? Does the ending provide a satisfying sense of completion or closure?
- Ideally, you received feedback from others on this essay. This feedback may have been provided by your teacher, classmates, peers, tutors at the Success Center, or someone else. How did you make use of the feedback? In what ways did you change the essay because of the feedback you received?
- These questions are just a beginning, a short primer to give you some ideas about what you might include in your cover letter. You should by *no means* imagine these questions as a guide or template for what portfolio readers expect from your cover letter, but they might give you some ideas for the kinds of material that can be covered in your letter.

Because the cover letter is such an important document, and because it's probably a new type of writing task for you, we thought we'd point out something you'll want to avoid in the cover letter: a lengthy summary of the essays you're including in your portfolio. Take a second and read this passage, then consider what the portfolio readers might think about it if they saw it in your cover letter:

One of my essays is entitled, "Illinois: the State Where Governors Go to Prison." In this essay, I've described what four of our last nine governors did that earned them a felony conviction, and I've talked about why I feel embarrassed when people bring this up about my state. I spend part of the essay explaining how at first I thought it was funny when John Stewart made fun of Illinois, and then I was a little irritated. Near the end of the essay, I will share with you how angry I was when I read about Rod Blagojevich's crimes. This is a subject that really makes me hot under the collar and I as you will see in my essay, I am sometimes embarrassed to be a resident of Illinois, even though it's a great state in some other ways.

Picture yourself as one of the portfolio readers looking at this portfolio on that long Saturday in December or May. What are they going to be reading as soon as they finish with this student's cover letter? Yep—you've figured out the problem here.

What should this student have been doing instead of summarizing the subject of his essays? After reading our explanations of the cover letter earlier in this section, we hope you will have a pretty good idea of what the writer could have focused on that would have impressed readers more than this summary.

On the next page, you'll find a chart that lists what the portfolio readers hope NOT to see (left column) and what they HOPE TO SEE (right column) in your cover letter. This handout was compiled by the very people who will be reading your portfolio, so we hope you will put this information to good use.

Tips on the Cover Letter/Reflective Essay

| <p>What we do NOT want to see in the cover letter or reflective essay (because these things are counter-productive)...</p> | <p>Types of things we strongly <u>hope to see</u> in the cover letter or reflective essay...</p> |
|--|--|
| <p>Formulaic content (just copying the style of other people’s cover letters)</p> <p>Lengthy summaries of the essays in your portfolio/reliving the experiences that are discussed in the essays</p> <p>Family backstory/family history that is not relevant to your writing process</p> <p>Excessive educational history (stuff that is not very relevant to your growth as a writer)</p> <p>Attempts to “guilt” us into passing you (emotional manipulation/blackmail)</p> <p>Attempts to butter us up</p> <p>Your teacher’s name or all sorts of details about how great (or not great) your teacher was</p> <p>Which class you are in (for example, do not say, “I’m currently in Eng 96”)</p> <p>Simple listing of steps in the writing process (just listing those steps is not enough—it won’t convince us of much)</p> <p>Buzzwords (in other words, do not just throw out words such as <i>invention</i> or <i>audience awareness</i> unless you can show us you know what they mean and that they really matter to how you think about writing)</p> <p>Sweeping generalizations about writing (for example, “Good writers always aim for a serious tone” – this statement takes a one-size-fits-all approach to writing)</p> | <p><u>Why you’ve chosen</u> these essays for the portfolio (go beyond, “I enjoyed this experience and always wanted to write about it” and “My teacher told us we had to write this type of paper”)</p> <p>How did you overcome your challenges as a writer this semester? (get specific...we want <u>detailed reflection</u> on what you did to become a better writer)</p> <p>What your <u>revision process</u> looked like as you improved your essays this semester—what types of changes you made and <u>why</u></p> <p><u>Comparison</u> of significant features of your <u>first draft</u> of one of your essays to your <u>final draft</u> of that same essay—examples of how you improved the essay’s development, or how you adjusted it for your audience, or how and why you reorganized it, or...</p> <p><u>How you decided</u> which details belong in your essays and which did not</p> <p>Metacognition (meaning, thinking about your thinking—<u>reflection</u> about <u>why you made the choices you did in your writing</u>)</p> <p>Attempts at persuading us (<u>convincing us</u>—with <u>evidence</u>) that your writing and revision skills have improved</p> |

Effective Cover Letters

The portfolio committee readers have identified the first four cover letters in this section as effective or persuasive in some significant way. These letters give readers a positive impression of the writer, and that, in itself, is a good thing. We're not saying these are perfect cover letters, but they're good.

When you're reviewing these cover letters, try to imagine what aspects of them were persuasive for the portfolio readers. What about them made a concrete impression on the readers? Was it the information they included? The self-analysis and reflection? The style of the writing? Its professionalism? Specificity? Anecdotes? Honesty? Something else?

Sample Cover Letter #1

Student 22223333

Instructor #XX

Dear Writing Committee,

Writing to me is like painting and when someone views the work they will take something away from it. A reader can for a moment experience a different world or perspective of thinking just from a simple essay. Writing is one way for a person to put their ideas and emotions on a piece of paper for someone to absorb and get something from it, but for me to accomplish this I must be a writer that is always trying to make my writing better. By revising and constantly putting myself in my readers shows so I know they will get viewpoint or story that I am trying to present. I know when I can do this with all my writing. I can use this for many areas of life rather it be for a job or a letter to a family member. Becoming an effective writer is very important to me because it is a tool that I must have to further and aid my education. Not only my education but in the future to someday use my ability to write to help my future in my career. I was not created to be a math engineer that is for sure but I love social sciences and working with people. I am leaning towards the fields of prelaw or therapy. I know that writing is very important in these fields and that is why becoming a polished writer is not just important, it is a necessity for me to succeed. I like writing about topics that bring new perspective and many readers can relate too. Not an arrogant point of view but an idea that a person might not have thought of before. My first idea is about my perspective of how America has changed. Growing up in this day and time I used this relevant topic to talk about how because America has changed in certain ways. How these changes has affected us in areas that society might not think of. To me it's not about agreeing with my idea, but for a second thinking outside the box. This idea lead me to my second paper which is also talking about a different perspective which is how technology has affected our lives. I like technology so this topic which helped me come up with this idea, but still both of these topics did not come to me. I came up with these topics

by writing a few paragraphs which started up the ignition of an idea that I was able to put these paper's together. Free writing has been a tool that really helps me come up with topics that have substances.

This past semester in English has helped me polish my writing but helping me refine techniques like free writing. This semester my instructor focused on how to get an idea to write about. The technique I really took off with was free writing. I have done free writing before but to be honest it was watered down. We watched a clip on a topic then free wrote after we watched it. The ideas were fresh on our mind. I adapted this into my own style. So when an idea came to me I would free write while that idea was alive. This helped me get topics that were solid and worth something.

Assuming my readers knew certain information was something that I was terrible at but my instructor always reinforced how to always give your readers details. I learned to always educate your readers with details because they will not know, unless I inform them. I am more aware to check for this in my writing and really focus on this when I was revising. I would rewrite parts of my essay to make sure my readers were equipped with the right information to get the most out of my writing. This helped my papers to be more developed.

I want to move on because I know it will amplify past techniques to a whole new level. I know the next level will help prepare me even more for my future. I am very excited to fulfill my potential and reach the high bar I have set for myself to always get better at my writing. Thank you for your time.

Sample Cover Letter #2

Student 22223333

Instructor #XX

Dear Writing Assessment Committee,

Initially, I would like to say how grateful I am for this program being available to me. Throughout the past year I have stepped up and realized to get anywhere in life you will need an education. So here I am, and I'm so proud that I stuck it out this semester and completed everything because when I first started I was wondering how the heck I would accomplish this class. I remember the first assignment we were assigned took me hours to even get a single word on the paper. I went to the Success Center, which did help. I completed the assignment and it may not have been exactly right, but I was somewhat on the right track, I realized all you have to do is try.

I have been out of high school for almost five years now and wow it's crazy how time flies. It goes even faster once you are actually going to school. All I wanted to do in high school was have fun, just like most high school students, then I graduated and 5 years passed and I was still living it up. Don't get me wrong I got to travel and see a lot of the U.S., along with meeting a lot of beautiful people, which was my own way of learning for the time being. So, eventually I realized it was time to make a move in the right direction. One thing that I like most about school is the feeling of accomplishment; I haven't had that feeling in a long time. Before I start homework I feel like "oh man I don't want to do this," but once you finally do it makes you feel really good about yourself to actually move forward and not back.

Throughout this semester I have realized time and practice are some of the key components in developing my writing. In the past I would only write when given as assignment in school. This isn't taking up too much time or practice; you're just doing what you're told to do. Free writing is a good thing to practice throughout the week, even if you're not told to, ten minutes a day will even help. This helps get your ideas down on paper. I know sometimes throughout the day I will have a thought for an assignment and I think to myself I'll just write it down later, then I forget so it also helps to carry a little notebook around with you in your back pocket.

I also noticed when you are given a topic by your instructor that's not very interesting, that it helps open different doors of perception about writing. Therefore, it gives that piece of writing a challenge and will help expand your mind and ideas. In the past, if I was told to write about something I didn't like, I wouldn't even try, and you will never get anywhere if you don't try. I believe when writing it helps to look a lot of the aspects in the writing process, such as brainstorming your topic, to help fit in with your audience and your own

way of getting your ideas down on paper. Then clustering or freewriting to help get you started, and speaking rhetorically tying all those aspects together to have a smooth fluent paper. It almost reminds me of the game Dominos in a way. For example, you set all the dominos up, maybe having to start over or make some changes, making sure all the dominos line up correctly, then starting with the first one knocking them down to make them flow all the way to the last.

The first essay I would like to introduce to you is about an influential person. This essay is interesting because I have never met this person in my life and they really are influential. If I wasn't in this class, it would never cross my mind how this person influenced me and I could end up like them someday, which would be very sad.

My second essay is an argumentative kind of writing, which was a little harder to do, but I still feel confident with it and it was a challenge that will help my future writing process. This essay is about the existence of extra-terrestrial life, which is something I have been interested in since I was a child; now I finally got the chance to get deeper in that subject.

I have realized that writing is a process; it is something that will stick with you and help throughout your life. Throughout this semester I have heard people complain about why they are in this class because they will not be using writing in their occupation. Well, I think it's more complex than that. It is a technique that will help you not only with school and work, but also to explain yourself to people in everyday situations, to help get your main idea across to them. Writing is a long learning process, though I feel I have made progress, I know I still have a lot to learn. Basically with writing and anything else in life, you have to keep evolving and changing if you want to get anywhere. Some people are afraid of change, but the only way to get past the fear is to try and keep working until you get it correct, then it becomes easier and easier as time goes on.

Sample Cover Letter #3

Student 01010101

Instructor 22222

This has been one very long stressful semester. I think I have talked to over 800 people about my Blackboard problems about twenty times this semester. Just for them to tell me the same thing, "Nothing is wrong with your account." However, enough of that, this Writing class has shown me that my writing is terrible, but with some help, it can go from terrible to good. If you know me I'm lazy, and I do not like being judged. So when my teacher told me we would be doing "peer review" with the other students in my class, I thought to myself, "Yup, I am dropping this class." However, as you can see I did not drop the class because I'm here doing this last essay in hopes to pass this class.

My writing is like food that looks good but tastes bad. My writing meets all of the requirements as in the length and words, but when you read my work, it is a total mess. It is like a tornado going through a town type of mess. I'm not good at sticking with one topic or idea so when I write I tend to go off in space leaving whoever is reading my story back on Earth asking what I just read. Nevertheless I was not going to let this class defeat me. I was going to kick these essays in their butt and come out passing this class, or so I hope I did.

My writing process is out of this world and to be honest I do not even think I have one. I just start writing, and if it is good, I keep it and if it is not I start over. It takes me hours to figure out what I want to write about, then about another five hours to figure out what I want to put on my paper as a rough draft for my classmates and teacher to see. When I write my essays I forget the other people are going to read them and that they most likely are not going to know what I'm talking about so I have to take the time to put in detail and explain it so they can understand it like I do. To me the purpose of writing is to express yourself. It's for the readers and understand you and learn something from your essay they didn't know before. When people write you can tell a lot from the writer by how they write and present their essays; but, for me that's horrible because they would most likely think I'm some demented person that needs to be locked up in a mental institution. So when I write I have to take it one paragraph at a time and put lots of detail in the essay so they can understand it.

When I did my first essay for the class I was so nervous about what the other people were going to think about my essay and my teacher on top of that. When I got my essay back I made about hundred mistakes just on one page. It was so embarrassing. I made mistakes from grammar to run-on sentences. In fact, my first essay for the class was ONE big long paragraph. After that essay I want to aliens or somebody to snatch me and take me as far as possible away from that class. When I put my essay in "peer review" the comments were better than I thought they was going to be. They said my story was interesting and relatable. I just had to work on my grammar

and punctuation. When I saw the comments it was a sign of relief for me and then I thought maybe I can pass this class with my horrible essays.

One of my essays was about my connection with the little mermaid I had which I thought was really good but knowing me I'll mess it up somehow. I tried to make the essay relatable and use a lot of detail in it. This totally back fired. When my teacher looked at it and commented on it, she basically told me I missed the whole point of the essay. I wanted to cry and give up. How can I mess up the whole essay I thought; so, I reviewed her comments which left me more confused than I was at first. I rewrote the whole essay AGAIN. I was so frustrated, but I focused on one thing and it turned out better than I thought it was. I had my dad read it to make sure it was okay and he said it was fantastic. Well, so he said, which I hope it was actually good and he wasn't just doing one of those parent things they do when they don't want to make their child feel bad.

My other essay was about an article titled "Cool like Me." I took a serious liking to this story because I never read anything like it before and it made me see "cool" in a whole different way. The story was uncomfortable to most people in my classroom because of his wording, but I thought it was blunt and I liked the way he used his words. It had an effectiveness to it that made the story stick with me. In the essay we had to agree or disagree with his interpretation of the word "cool." Of course I agreed with it because the story was so relatable and it spoke to me in a way. When writing this essay I put a lot of detail in it and examples and explained myself really well for readers to understand where I was coming from. The peer review for this essay was not pleasant for me. I didn't like what some people said. The story was really easy to connect to which to me feels like it was a good essay in my point of view.

This reflection might not be the idea reflection that the teachers would like to see, but this is me. This is my writing style the words, the phrases and how it's put together. That's me to the pure core. Even if people didn't like all my essays, I took their comments and made it better. My purpose for writing is for the readers to understand me a little better and see the essay in a different light. This class has taught me a lot about myself and my writing in general. My writing may not be the best but that's okay because it's me.

Sample Cover Letter #4

Student 22223333

Instructor #XX

Dear Writing Assessment Committee,

Taking an English college class was a big challenge for me. My first language is not English, so I am still in an English learning process. I grew up in Germany, and I never moved away from my hometown, Wiesbaden, where I was born and raised. I have been in America since April 20XX. To give up my job, my apartment, and to leave my family behind was a big step for me. Going back to college was not just to get a better degree than the associate in Business I earned in Germany; I would also like to develop stronger English skills. I see my future in the United States and always look for opportunities to improve myself.

I will never forget my first day of class. I went to school full of enthusiasm and had no idea how my first class of English writing would be. Not even the first hour had passed, and I already had a bad feeling that I will never pass this class. We all did some freewriting and I was overwhelmed, because I could not really write fast in English. My classmates had a whole page and I did not even have a half page full, which worried me a lot. We also already received that day our first assignment for the next week, which made me even more nervous than I already was. I never wrote an essay in English, but I thought I would figure it out on my own; it cannot be so different from how it was in Germany.

After class, I waited for my sister who had school that day as well. She instantly saw in my face that something was wrong. I was so nervous that I talked too fast, and she could not understand a word I said. I told her that it was too difficult for me and I do not think I will be able to pass this class. I really thought about quitting, but I was too determined to give up. My sister supports me in everything I do. She told me if I would work hard on it I will make it into English 101 like she did. I thought if she can do it, then I can do it too. Honestly, at that time I really did not believe it. My sister has been here in America for almost four years, and she knows how intimidating the first day of school can be. She told me that I should not worry so much and that everything is going to be fine. My dilemma is I am afraid to fail and that sometimes make it more difficult than it really is.

My second day at school was not so bad. My classmates are very nice and I truly enjoyed the peer-review. The teacher put us in groups of four, and we looked over our papers and gave our comments. At first I thought, "Great, how I am supposed to help them with their papers? As soon as my classmates find out that I am still learning English, then they will probably try to join others groups." I was surprised that my classmate did not have a problem with that. Actually, they were interested in my opinion, which gave me a lot more self-confidence in my own writing. I was not so afraid to write anymore, which was a fear I had at the beginning of the class.

When I have to write an essay, I start with brainstorming to get an idea what points I would like to cover in my paper. Freewriting is not a helpful instrument for me. I do that after my brainstorming activity for about 15 minutes, and I already have my main ideas on paper which saves me a lot of time. To get more details for my paper I use the method of looping, that was also learned at school. Now, I just have to organize and rewrite my paper. I worked for a big company in Germany as a manager assistant. To write letters or e-mails was one of the most important things I had to do. I loved my job and I had no problems to write a business letter which has to be written professionally and in perfect German. I always was good in writing and that is the reason why it is so important to me to get better in English writing. Writing is one of the most important skills you need in life. It is communication between you and the person who reads your letter or e-mail. I had to read a lot of letters or e-mails from customers and colleagues, and when they were written well you treat them differently. With your writing you represent yourself, and when it is written well you already have the respect from the person who reads your letter. They see you are educated without knowing you, and they will treat you differently. I cannot tell you why, I think it is just in our heads. It is the same when a person asks you for the time or for a direction, and when he or she looks well-groomed you take more time to help them out than a person who smells bad and wears dirty clothes.

I am glad that I did not quit that English class. I learned more in those four months than I have learned the year before. My construction of sentences has become a lot better, and my vocabulary has risen dramatically. I have not just improved my writing skills; I am also getting better in speaking, which is very important for me. I always try to improve myself, and the English class was very helpful in doing that for me. Thanks a lot to my great teacher and classmates who have helped me to reach my goal. I have the self-confidence to say that I am ready for English 101, and I hope you, the writing assessment committee, will see it the same way.

A sincerely, grateful student

An Underdeveloped Cover Letter

The letter below has real potential; however, the writer does not go into enough detail about the writing and revision choices she made as she worked on her essays. The instructors who read this letter at the Hootenanny did not see enough self-reflection here—or at least not detailed reflection—to justify sending the student beyond English 96, and one of the readers was on the fence for a while between 95 and 96.

As you read this cover letter, look for places where the writer could have elaborated. What advice would you give this writer if he was your classmate or friend?

Dear Writing Committee

I realize you are human and enjoy reading interesting pieces of work. I feel the exact same way, which is why I try my best to write about making things interesting by putting my thoughts into them. I would like to note that I am a chess player so I enjoy analyzing my papers to a deep extent. I like to think of the best ways to word and write my paper. This in return has helped me grow into a more detailed writer which I hope you see. I must admit throughout school that writing was not my favorite class, I always preferred Gym but, lately it has began to take a certain interest and I really enjoy writing papers of my choice because that is what I am most interested in.

Most of my struggles when I write papers are how to word my ideas I remember in 7th grade I had to write a paper on my favorite thing to do which was chess at the time and writing about it and explaining the game is not as simple as it sounds, people gave this dead-look expression like they didn't have a clue what I was talking about but, normally try to remain outside the box. Usually I just explore different variations to write my paper.

I am very glad I took this writing class. I have learned a lot like the important of having a clear flexible paper and detailing things so they give the reader something to capture in their imagination.

My first paper which is titled "Wild One" was the most fun to write because I was practically smiling the whole time thinking about the good memories. My 2nd paper is titled "Hats off to Doctor King" this paper talks about Martin Luther King Jr. and his influence toward racial segregation.

All in all this writing class has been a wonderful experience. I have learned a lot and feel I am ready to take the next step towards writing. Thank you for your time.

Sample Reflective Essay

Since you've probably written more essays this semester than letters, you may find that the format of the reflective essay suits you better than the cover letter. **However, the cover letter and the reflective essay share one essential trait: detailed reflection on the choices you have made as a writer this semester.** We're interested in gaining insight to how you wrote your essays and particularly what you did to improve them. We want to know the thoughts or questions that went through your mind as you contemplated changing different aspects of your papers.

The following reflective essay is a solid example of a writer examining his choices and habits with regard to the writing he did this semester. After reading this essay, members of the portfolio committee had a reasonable amount of confidence in the writer's ability to adapt to the different situations he'll encounter in future classes. This is because they understood the thinking process that helped shape his writing.

My Writing Experience

Writing is like describing a feeling or thought so that the reader can get a better idea of what the person is trying to say when he or she is reading the essay. The person's ideas or thoughts are put on paper for someone to share it. I am a writer who is always trying to write better and get a better understanding of what I am trying to writing.

Being a good writer is very useful in many ways not only for education but also for jobs. Employers look for people who have the ability to present themselves and show their determination to work for them. For this they need to write and present themselves with a resume. A resume shows your ability to write and so the Employer can get an idea of what you are trying to say. Though I may not be the best at English, I sure love learning more ways of getting better at it.

My first essay was about explaining acceptance to my readers, to show why it is important for people to be accepted. The purpose of acceptance is for people to get to know other people so they can fit into society and make new contacts. Acceptance gives a person the ability to show people who they really are and what their capable of.

Thinking about acceptance then made me think about another topic, which lead me to my second essay, which has a different view and is about how video games do not promote teen aggression and violence. I really enjoy video games so this topic

really related to me and helped me come up with this idea. Both of these topics came as an assignment, which we had to choose and write about and turn into our teacher. For my essay on the acceptance topic, I came up with my own ideas but for the persuasive paper. I had to search the internet for professional's ideas to back up my own ideas about why video games do not promote teen aggression and violence. I did a lot of free writing for both of my essays and it helped me come up with good ideas to put my papers together.

This semester in English helped me understand what I'm writing about and taught me ways on how to write better papers. My instructor helped me by providing invention questions to think of ideas for writing and by showing me how to correct my weaknesses. The most useful method for gathering ideas was free writing. I have done free writing before however, I am better at it than I was before. When I was given a topic I would brainstorm ideas for a while and just write down what seemed like good ideas in my notebook. After coming up a few ideas, I would make them into a sentence and organize them into an essay and type it. When I was done writing I would print it out, and re-read it to see if I made any mistakes. This would help me determine what I did wrong and what I can do to make sure I don't make the same mistakes again. I would review my essay over and over again to make sure readers are given the right amount of detail to understand what I am trying to say so they get the most out of my essay. This helped me see if my paper made sense.

The best part about this semester was not only having the teachers help me, but also my classmates. If I missed a day of class and didn't catch the latest assignment for class, the next time I showed up my classmates would catch me up on what I missed and what the next assignment is. Because of this I was able to turn in my work on time and if I needed help, one of my fellow classmates would be there to assist me.

To improve my essays for my future classes, I will look back at some of my work from my previous class and review all the mistakes I've made and make sure I've understood them, so I can be prepared to write better papers. My essays demonstrate what I've learned from the beginning of the semester to the end, to show how much improvement I've made and how I've become more aware of what I can do now, than I could not when I first started.

I feel I am ready to move on to the next level of English, so it will help me to become successful and to prepare me for the future. Thank you for your time.