

ENG100
Comprehensive, Reflective Letter to Introduce Portfolio

In this reflective introduction to your Process Portfolio, I am looking for three types of knowledge: self-knowledge, writing knowledge and critical knowledge. In this letter, your goal is **to help me understand how you developed as a writer this semester**. As you compose the letter, I hope that by explaining what you've learned and by reviewing the work you did for the Portfolio you will also make new self-discoveries about your writing abilities.

First, let me explain the three types of knowledge I'm looking for you to demonstrate:

Self-knowledge: By self-knowledge, I mean your understanding of how you are developing as a writer. Think about the writer you were in January, the writer you are now, and the writer you hope to become.

Writing knowledge: By writing knowledge, I mean your awareness of audience, purpose and subject – your awareness of expressing your ideas clearly to others in writing.

Critical knowledge: By critical knowledge, I mean your awareness of significant strengths and weaknesses in your writing. One of my goals for you by the end of English 100 is to be able to identify what you like or value in pieces you've written and to be able to explain why to others.

I suggest that to deal with all three of these areas of knowledge, you look back at the six questions I asked you to answer at our last class period. If you weren't in class on May 1, I strongly suggest you get a copy of these questions from me and spend time answering them before you jump into writing the letter. If you answer all six of those questions in your letter, you will have covered all three types of knowledge – though you're free to bring up other issues, concerns and ideas as well.

Second, let me explain what I'm looking for in the letter. Feel free to write informally and to address me directly (and to use the first-person "I" and "me"), but please write clearly. Try to use correct grammar and spelling.

Providing specific, detailed support for your reflection will be important, too. For instance, if you talk about learning the importance of making a thesis statement evolve throughout your essay, you should also describe how and where you do this in the essays in your Portfolio. You'll want to refer to the essays in your Portfolio and to specific passages within those essays.

Whatever theme or metaphor you have chosen for your portfolio on the cover page, explain it to me in your letter. For instance, in my teaching portfolio, I use the image of a tree to represent how I see education: as flexible, like a tree swaying with the wind, because teachers need to adapt to their students, and as ever-growing, like a tree that continues to grow over the years, because education should be a life-long process.

Finally, two last pieces of advice: 1) This is not the best place to argue for the grade you think you deserve (no "why I deserve an A" essays, please), to criticize my teaching style or the class

itself (no “here’s why I hated this class” essays, please), or to make excuses for poor performance (no “my life fell apart so I didn’t put much effort into this class” essays, please).

2) Don’t feel compelled to convince me that this one course has cured all of your writing troubles. How much and how well you believe you developed as a writer this semester, and how accurately you believe your Portfolio reflects that development, will differ from student to student. I am much more interested in a genuine, insightful reflection that helps you learn more about yourself as a writer than I am in a flattering portrayal of my teaching abilities.

Reflecting On Your Development as a Writer in English 100

Use these questions as invention prompts for your reflective letter, to be composed during the final exam time. I'll collect these at the end of class and distribute them to you at the final exam.

1. What did I believe about my writing abilities when I started this course? What do I think now? _____

2. How has my writing changed over the term? What new abilities will I take away from this course? _____

3. What have I learned about writing for an academic audience this semester? How has that knowledge affected the way I write? _____

4. How do I plan to use the writing strategies I learned in this class in the future? _____

5. Of the essays I've written in this class – the Literacy Narrative, Review and Proposal – which do I think is the best, and why? _____

Which is the weakest in my opinion, and why? _____

6. What are the most important things I still have to learn as a writer? _____
