

## Guiding Student Reflection in the Classroom

After attending the first session of the “Fostering Independence” workshop at First Literacy, I decided to use my classroom agenda and reflection activities more purposely. My goal was to help students—a mixed level beginner level ESOL class—take responsibility for their own learning.

I started by being explicit about the word “reflection” and why we do it. I defined reflection as “thinking about class” and explained to students that reflection helps us to remember what we learn each class.

I then adapted a reflection form to use at the end of each class in which students wrote what we did in class, what they liked, and what they want to do in future classes. At the bottom of the form, I added a modified pain chart for “Class today was \_\_\_\_\_” so that even lower-level students, or students were having bad days, could respond. (See actual form below.)

Teaching students how to use the reflection form has been somewhat complicated, and we’re still working on it three weeks into the new semester. For students who are used to being passive learners, it’s an adjustment. To guide students in using the form, I made active use of the class agenda. I post the agenda at the start of every class, often pointing to it throughout the class asking, “What have we done so far?” and “What’s next?”

The first few times I asked students to fill out the reflection form, I left the agenda on the board. This provided a model for practicing sentences and for recalling the activities. I asked students to copy the agenda items under “Today in class we did.” Then I asked them to choose one agenda item for “I liked.” Now I’m slowly removing the scaffolding, so in the future I will be able to erase the agenda before they fill out the form. Recalling each part of class, and producing the language in writing, not only reinforces the material, it teaches my students to be more active learners.

I have always used reflection in my classes, but in the past, I wrestled with making it both meaningful for beginners and useful for me. Now I’ve found a routine that works.

### Reflection

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Today in class we did:

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I liked \_\_\_\_\_

I want more \_\_\_\_\_

Class today was ...

