Reflective Writing

Reflective writing refers to a text that is focused on understanding the actions and perspective of the writer. Unlike other forms of academic writing, the thoughts and opinions of the writer are more important in reflective writing. But, the writer should also argue through their examples using summary and analysis. From this perspective, reflective writing is actually very similar to other academic texts.

If you are asked to reflect on your choices as a writer or practitioner, you should be able to defend your choices. Sometimes we think that we are simply doing something because we have been asked to do it by our supervisors. But, in fact, we should be able to think about the purposes for our various actions and our choices about how to accomplish a task. The purpose of reflective writing is to reach a level of awareness of our own decisions and to analyse them.

Summarise
You should still offer your actions as a starting point for discussion. What did you do? What did you write? What did you accomplish? What happened?

Analyse
This is where you investigate what worked and what didn't by asking why?

Evidence
During your analysis, you can include specific evidence from either your own work (citing specific passages) or perhaps some outside resources (‘according to…’).

Conclude
Your reflection should conclude with a new understanding, a resolution of the question raised. Offering new strategies will often convey a sense of the new understanding best to your reader.

Too critical?
It is perfectly fine to be critical of mistakes. Often we want to portray our best self when we write. But, it will not influence your mark if you are pointing out ways to improve. Often the most fruitful reflection comes when we focus on things we didn’t do perfectly. But, don’t dwell. Try to find a mix of successes and near-successes to highlight, if possible.

Final thoughts
Remember that reflective writing means to hold up a mirror. All that curiosity and wonder should be directed inward, but, the writing should still be rigorous. Ask hard questions, and find answers.