**What is a Reflective Journal**

A journal is primarily a place for reflection. The word -reflection- contains the notion of giving back, of returning. When one reflects about something, one considers it and often tries to consider its meaning in a larger context. Reflection is additive in nature. You add something to your observations or your experiences so that they take on meaning.   
  
Therefore it is not the experience but the ***meaning of the experience*** that the journal should convey. Conveying this meaning is not easy to do, particularly when you haven't had much practice at it. Allow yourself the time necessary to think hard about what you have seen, heard, felt, thought, and done in various situations, and why you reacted the way you did.

Journals are a reflective learning tool. They are useful for helping you think about what you are learning at your workplace.

**A good journal will describe an experience you had:**

1. Describe the feeling or event. *(Use details and examples)*
2. Analyze the way you felt or your reaction to the event. *(Using the topics below)*
3. What were you doing at the time?
4. Was your involvement self-initiated?
5. Who were you with?
6. What was the setting?
7. What values were you expressing?
8. What skills were you using?
9. What interests were you exploring?
10. How did it feel?

I. What does this say about you, what is important to you(values, working conditions etc..)

1. Determine what you learned.

Weekly Journals are to be a two-part reflection of your work place observations.

Part 1: Reflect on your week at work (see above). You can choose a theme topic from below or one of your own. Submit a journal each week (by Tuesday AM). This reflection should be at least a half page-hand written – this can be completed on the back side of the log sheet in your log book. If you choose to do them separately ensure you title the top as Weekly Journal # (week #) and date them for the Monday it is due. Each journal has a value of 10.

Part 2:

(A) On the lower half of the page - or a separate page Reflect on at least 1 skill or habit you observed, practiced or learned and why you think this skill/ habit is important to the job and your future plans.

(See the list of skills and Habits at the end of this handout) Think about and plan the following:

1. how you will acquire or improve these skills.

2. who will assist you with your improvement.

3. how will your progress be monitored.

4. how will you know when you have reached the desired level of skill performance.

Journal Entry #1: **First Impressions**

Complete this entry after the first week of your work placement.

Describe highlights of your first week on the job, including the answers to the following questions:

* What were your impressions during your first day on the job?
* Did things change as you began to work?
* Briefly describe two or three goals you have for your future career. How do you plan to begin working on these goals through your Coop placement?
* Describe your current responsibilities.
* What responsibilities do you hope to get as your work placement progresses?
* Describe one or two things that you would like to change about your placement and/or expectations that you may have.

Journal Entry #2: **Safety First**

Define the role that safety plays in your workplace by answering the following questions:

* What precautions must be taken to ensure that there is a safe working environment?
* What role do you play in keeping things safe?
* Identify potential hazards in your workplace and explain the process used to prevent accidents or injuries from occurring.
* What emergency strategies have been discussed with you? Are you confident you would know what to do in an emergency situation?

Identify some things that you can do, or work on, to make you even more confident and aware of the steps to take in an emergency situation.

Journal Entry #3: **Communication, Knowledge, & Understanding**

Write about how these three words help you learn and progress in your work placement.

* How is your comfort level when approaching employees with a question
* or when you don’t understand what they are talking about and you seek clarification of a concept or procedure?
* How do you feel the employees respond to your questions and inquiries?

Journal Entry #4: **Trust**

Write about how it feels to be trusted by the people you work with.

* Has someone given you a task to do by yourself that you are not sure you can do?
* Have you been entrusted with a job where you need to work with others to successfully complete?
* Do you feel like you belong to the team as a full member in the workplace?

Journal Entry #5: **The "I" in Team**

In a workplace, no person can function in isolation. Teamwork and communication are critical components. You might work with a group of people all doing a similar job, and/or you might be part of a cross-functional team with members doing very different tasks toward the same goal. Your supervisor is typically part of your team, too.

* Describe what you and your co-workers and supervisor are working to accomplish. What is the purpose and goal(s) of your team?
* What do you do to contribute toward the goal(s) of the team? How do you see yourself as an effective member?
* Describe how some of the tasks and interactions you do relate to the work of others.
* Describe how employees interact within your organization to get a specific task accomplished, and how they interact as part of a team.
* What could go wrong if your team didn't "pull together"? Give two specific examples of how a breakdown in communication, or a failure to work as a team could have a harmful impact on your team's goals.

Journal Entry #6: **Got Problems?**

In the workplace, people are expected to solve problems on a daily basis. Describe a situation in which a problem occurred at your workplace.

* What was the problem and (how) was it resolved?
* Take a look at the problem again, and apply the problem-solving process in hindsight. If the process wasn't used, describe how it could have been. Be sure to describe each step:
* Define the problem and its impact. What were the needs/wants in this situation?
* Analyze the problem. What were the root causes? Who could shed more light on the problem?
* Generate solutions. Be creative.
* Evaluate solutions.
* Choose the best action.
* Evaluate the result. How do you know you've made the best decision?
* After reflecting on the problem, do you think you could have come up with a better solution? Why or why not?

Journal Entry #7: **Secrets of Success**

* When you think of a person who is successful, what attributes/skills do you consider?
* Explain why these attributes are important to you.
* How do these attributes relate to your Coop 120 workplace?
* Identify a person at your workplace that you would consider to be successful. Explain what it is about that person's skills, attitudes, approach, or knowledge that makes them successful – give several examples.
* What characteristics of this person would you like to model?
* Give examples of how you can build your own attitudes and skills to be more successful.

Journal Entry #8: **You're the Boss**

For this entry, take the perspective of your employer and use that point of view to analyze the job you're doing now.

* What qualities would you look for on a résumé for working in this industry? Why are those qualities advantageous?
* What kind of personality would be a good fit for this job? Describe some key attributes.
* How do you know when an employee is ready to perform a task independently?
* How do you know when to give an employee more challenging responsibilities?
* What would make the workplace more productive and successful, from your standpoint as an employer?

Journal Entry #9: **Good Day**

As an employee, you have many interactions with others and are given different responsibilities. Reflecting on your work experience so far:

* Describe and analyze a really good day.
* What made this day so special?
* How did others make you feel?
* Give examples of things that you did that illustrate how you have grown in knowledge and expertise since beginning your Coop 120 placement.

Journal Entry #10: **Learning from Doing**

Write about how you are learning how to complete different tasks by being at the job placement.

* Have you found that you learn better from hands on experience by yourself or from having someone show you how to do a task more easily?
* How do you feel when you are able to complete a task on your own and see a successful end result?
* How do you feel about the tasks you are completing? Can you see yourself doing these tasks every day?

Journal Entry #11: **That's SWOT**

A SWOT (pronounced "swat") analysis is a planning tool used in many organizations to analyze a plan from four different angles:

* **Strengths**
* **Weaknesses**
* **Opportunities**
* **Threats**

Take a close, analytical look at the area of employment you're in for your work placement, and conduct a SWOT analysis on it as a career path.

* **Strengths:** Explain the "good" points about this career, profiling how the responsibilities and job description relate to your skills, interests, and values.
* **Weaknesses:** Identify some things that are "not so good" about the job or the career outlook, along with aspects of the job that don't suit your skills, attributes, and preferences.
* **Opportunities:** What are the job prospects like? Are there opportunities for advancement in this career path? Is professional development, travel, leisure time, etc. part of the plan? Would you consider the salary as being an opportunity for a better life style, or is it minimal in that it may be considered a weakness of this job? What are the implications?
* **Threats:** What are the dangers associated with this job? (Dangers could be physical, financial, interpersonal, etc.) How do they relate to you? How can they be prevented?

Do the results of your SWOT analysis change your thinking about the job you're doing? Explain your response.

Journal Entry #12: **Career Goals**

Write about how the job placement has helped you with your career planning.

* Have you decided that you will follow the career you are exploring in Co-op or will you probably look at other options?
* Is the career in reality what you expected it to be when you first thought about following it?
* Have you seen other career paths in the same area that you might be interested in researching?
* Has your Co-op experience posed more questions than it has answered?
* What are the next steps for you? And how has Co-op aided in discovering these steps?

Journal Entry #13: **Quality**

Write about how your job placement requires quality standards to be constantly met.

* How does poor quality workmanship reflect on all of the employees at the work placement?
* How important is it that even the most mundane jobs when done well make you feel good about what you have done?

Journal Entry #14: **Expectation vs. Reality**

Describe and analyze what you learned from Coop 120:

* Was your placement what you had expected? Why or why not?
* If given the opportunity, are there things that you would like to have done differently?
* Give some examples of how your work experience related to topics covered in class.
* How did your work experience relate to your plans following graduation?
* What two pieces of advice would you give to future Coop 120 students, if asked?

No Journal Entry required for week 15 (but the Log is required)

**Lists of Workplace Skills and Habits:**

**Workplace Skills: Workplace Habits:**

**Working Safely**

**Attendance**

**Attitude**

**Self-Advocacy**

**Relations with others**

**Dependability**

**Initiative**

**Handling Criticism**

**Judgement**

**Working Independently**

**Customer Service**

**(inside & outside customers)**

**Organization**

**Entrepreneurship**

**Reading Text**

**Document Use**

**Writing**

**Numeracy**

**Oral Communication**

**Written Communication**

**Thinking Skills**

**Working with others**

**Computer Use**

**Continuous Learning**

**Career specific skills (tools equipment etc.)**