Helpful phrases for reflective writing

The following are a few suggestions for words and phrases that might be useful in reflective writing. Using any of these words and phrases will help you to describe or analyse an event or experience for your assignment. The phrases are set out according to a three-part structure for a reflective writing piece: Description, Interpretation & Outcome. This is just a suggested structured approach to reflective writing. Always check your assignment marking guide for your lecturer’s requirements.

1. Description (the short bit): What happened? What is being examined?
When describing the specific event or experience, there is a range of possible words and phrases you can use. But remember that when describing an idea, for example a theory or model, it is usually best to use the present tense e.g. ‘Social interdependence theory recognises…’ (not ‘recognised’). Events or experiences are nearly always described using the past tense.

2. Interpretation (probably the most important bit): What is most important / interesting / useful / relevant about the object, event or idea? How can it be explained e.g. with theory? How is it similar to and different from others?

For me, the [most] relevant important useful

aspect(s) element(s) experience(s) was/were

issue(s) ideas(s)

learning arose from happened when resulted from

Previously,
At the time, I thought (did not think)...
At first, felt (did not feel)...
Initially, knew (did not know)...
Subsequently, noticed (did not notice)...
Later, questioned (did not question)...
realised (did not realise)...

[Alternatively,]
[Equally,]

This might be is perhaps could be is probably

because of... due to... explained by... related to...

This is similar to... is unlike... because...

[Un]Like... this reveals... demonstrates...
3. Outcome: What have I learned from this? What does this mean for my future responses?

Having read... experienced... applied... discussed... I now feel... think... realise... wonder... question... know...

[Additionally,] [Furthermore,] I have learned that...

[Most importantly,]

I have significantly developed my skills in... I have slightly improved my understanding of... However, I have not [sufficiently] improved my knowledge of... my ability to...

This means that...
This makes me feel...

This understanding is essential to me as a learner [because...]
This skill could be important to me as a practitioner [because...]

Because I

did not... have not yet... do not yet know... am not yet certain about... am not yet confident about... do not yet understand...

I will now need to...

As a next step, I need to...