

Keeping a Journal

Why do people journal?

A journal can mean different things to different people. To some a journal can be a type of memoir: a life story written down for others to enjoy. For others, a journal is an outlet to record personal feelings, thoughts and events that no other person is meant to read. It doesn't really matter what your reason is for keeping a journal, as long as you enjoy the process.

What is a journal?

No matter what the idea of "journaling" means to you, it should be clear that no one technique is better than another for keeping a journal. Some people like to keep their journal in a secret book and start each passage using a "Dear Journal" method; others take a more modern approach and keep an on-line journal. What about a tape recorder or a pocket size notebook? Any of these can work.

What should I write about?

A journal can be a very intimate instrument used to express emotions, feelings or events that you might not want to share with anyone else. Or, you may use a journal to capture ideas for future use in your writing. This doesn't mean you can't write about ordinary, everyday experiences as well. Reflect on why you want to keep a journal in the first place, and remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

How often do I have to write in my journal?

Writing in a journal is a personal experience that is as diverse as the people who do it. You don't need to write in your journal everyday. You may decide to write in your journal each night before bed, or choose to wait until the end of the week. The most important thing to keep in mind as you begin your journaling is to be consistent. Writing is like any activity: the more you do it the better you get at it. As long as your writing is consistent and self-satisfying, you should feel free to explore different styles of journaling.

What to write about when there's nothing to write about...

My first car was...

The boss that I had the most trouble with was...

One of the most embarrassing things to ever happen to me was...

A secret that I have never told anyone is...

Someplace I've always wanted to go is...

The thing I am most proud of in my life is...

My favorite holiday experience was...

The thing I most remember from my childhood is was...

The one thing I regret most is...

Something I've always wanted to do, but could never work up the nerve is...

If I could change one thing about myself is would be...

A favorite past time of mine has always been...

I wanted to be this when I grew up...

My favorite food is...

My pet's name is...

The worst movie I've ever seen is...

The Community Writing Center has several books with ideas and advice about keeping journals and can provide you with "prompts" or "starting points" and other useful information.

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