

KEEPING A PERSONAL JOURNAL

“Life is a journey, not a destination”

I. WAYS OF THINKING OF A JOURNAL

1. Think of your journal as a jewel box for gems—quotes, ideas, insights, analogies, and nutshell wisdom.
2. Think of your journal as a storehouse into which you pack away canned goods (others' ideas) in preparation for a rainy day when you can think them over, reject them, accept them, add to them.
3. Think of your journal as a collector's cabinet. What do you like to collect? Ironic quirks of life? People's similarities or differences? Memories of beautiful moments?
4. Think of your journal as a photo album and you are a roving reporter taking pictures of life. See life through a lens—telescopic, microscopic, or wide angle—in focus.
5. Think of your journal as a psychoanalyst's couch, a confession. Lie down and talk, talk, talk. Explore your dreams, fantasies, and truths.
6. Think of your journal as a tape recorder attached to your mind. Don't worry about how to say something; just say it fast so you're ready to catch the next thought before it gets away.
7. Think of your journal as a continuous but unmailed letter to a specific, real person. Write to your best friend, your lover, and a child. What would you want to tell them?
8. Think of your journal as a letter to yourself. What do you want to tell yourself or remember ten years from now? Which of your many selves do you wish to write to?

II. BASIC RULES FOR JOURNAL WRITING

1. Write continuously for ten minutes—ideas should be gathered ahead of time. No “thinking” during that time, or sharpening pencils, or rereading former writings. Time will be allowed for these necessary activities.
2. If thoughts go “dry” write the last word over and over or “think” or “I don't know what to write” until you are ready to continue.
3. Apply proper rules for correct writing and penmanship, showing improvement as time goes on.
4. Entries can be written during the ten minutes allotted in class, and anytime you want to write.
5. Diary entries and any of a variety of ideas can be included in the journal. (See Ideas for Journal Writing).

6. If spelling a word is a problem, leave it blank, or spell the best way you can.
7. Journals will be collected periodically for one writing grade, on the basis of volume and mechanical writing maturity.
8. Privacy will be respected. If you don't want the teacher to read it, cover it with a paper or staple it. You are writing for you. When I collect this for a grade, I don't intend to read all—just spots to get an idea of quantity and quality of writing—vocabulary, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, etc.
9. No more than one day a week can be “dry” where you write “think, think, think” the whole ten minutes.

III. IDEAS FOR JOURNAL WRITING

Make lists on the first few pages of your journals. These can serve as starting points for writing.

- questions you think are particularly important to you.
- memories—successes, good times, times with friends, family crises, conflicts, times of sadness.
- emotions you've had in recent weeks. Write down the circumstances.
- worries concerning your career, home life, personal life, future
- funny incidents that have happened recently
- mistakes you've made
- special times—holidays, celebrations, weddings, vacations
- anything that makes you happy—books, music, friends, movies, sports, leisure activities
- influential people in your life
- fantasies
- gripes
- likes
- scraps of overheard conversation
- trips alone
- memorable scenes
- interesting settings
- personal experiences
- dreams
- daydreams
- bumper sticker slogans
- quotes (your own and those of others)
- puns
- striking comparisons
- ideas
- movies, plays, television shows, songs, poems
- your reaction to a current problem or the world situation in general stimuli which bring back a memory—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches
- interesting names
- a memorable passage of writing

