

A Simple Guide to Keeping a Journal

Keeping a journal is a wonderful activity for your personal growth. It forces you to reflect on your life regularly. It becomes more obvious where your challenges lie when you have to put your experiences down on paper.

It can also serve as a great way to record your life and see how you've grown over the years. You might be surprised three years from now when you look back on today.

It can be tough to get started: what do you write about? Should you use a notebook, word processor or something fancy like a leather-bound journal?

These tips can help you get started:

1. **Choose your medium.** It really doesn't matter where you record your life; all have their advantages and disadvantages. Just choose something that works for you.
 - ***Notebooks do tend to be a better choice.*** Many of us spend all day typing away on our computers. Journaling in a notebook gives you a chance to manually write something. It seems more sacred to write with our own hand. Computers can also be distracting; you might sit down to do your journaling and end up surfing the Internet.
2. **Keep it short.** Of course, you can write as much as you want. But if you keep it short, you'll be a lot more likely to do it regularly. Even just a few bullet points can be enough to capture the essence of what happened in your day.
3. **Set a schedule.** If you use a notebook, keep it by your bed or the coffee pot; that way you won't miss it. Set a reminder on your computer. It makes more sense to do it at the end of the day as you reflect on your day, but any time is better than never. Choose a time and stick to it.
4. **Never miss more than one day.** Things come up, and it's easy to miss a day here and there. If you miss more than one day in a row, you might wind up missing five days before you know it. Be consistent. It can be difficult to go back and fill in the blanks at a later date.
 - ***If you do forget and skip a couple of days, rely on your records.*** You can look back at your calendar or planner and your emails to jog your memory about how the days were spent.

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- 5. Track your progress toward your goals.** List the things that are most relevant to you at the time. For example, if you're trying to lose weight, mention related victories, missteps, and your weight fluctuations. If you're trying to earn an extra \$1,000 this month, keep a running tally of your progress.
- 6. Keep your journal private and secure.** If you believe that someone else might see it, you might be hesitant to be completely open when writing in it. This is one area that computers really shine; with a decent password, it would take the CIA to get into your journal. A simple locked drawer can work well, too.

Before you know it, you'll have a shelf full of your journal entries. Consider that writing just half of a page each day would be over 3,000 pages in 10 years!

Journaling is an excellent way to record your life and track your progress. Think about how interesting it would be to read your current entries 10 or even 50 years from now. You might even want to give your journals to your children someday. Begin your journal today. A life worth living is a life worth recording!