



The Basics of Journaling

Choose a type of journal.

You may opt for a pen and paper approach, or a keyboard approach with the journal either stored

on your own private computer or on a secure, web-based journaling program (e.g., [ww.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)).

Cue yourself. Identify a way to remind yourself to journal.

- Keep the journal in a place where you have good access to it
- Make a journaling appointment with yourself, put it on your calendar
- Integrate journaling time into your lifestyle just as you do with other health habits – journal each night after you brush your teeth, or each week before or after you attend a yoga class

Confidentiality is imperative. Keep your journal private, so that you feel free to share innermost thoughts with abandon.

Consistency is another important consideration. Some experts recommend a 15 minute minimum period of time per journaling session. Try this and see if it works for you. Also, determine if this can be a daily, weekly or otherwise regular practice. Alternately, choose to journal intermittently, as needed.

Content will be determined based on your priorities. Do focus some of your time on your very deepest feelings, and get specific, putting down details of your experiences. It can be very helpful to look specifically at negative experiences, as this can help you to release blocked emotions. Also important is time spent on positive experiences, including the opportunity to practice gratitude. The website

www.gratefulness.org has “Practices for Grateful Living” that you might wish use as a starting point. Additionally, you can go to www.ehow.com and search for “How to Keep A Gratitude Journal” for some practical tips.

Creativity can be expressed in many ways when you are journaling. When writing, simply let your thoughts and ideas flow. Don’t worry about things like spelling or grammar. Also, consider incorporating other modalities into your journal:

- Draw or create a visual representation of your thoughts and feelings.
- Cut out pictures from magazines for your journal, with or without written thoughts accompanying them.
- Use personal photos

Contemplate what you’ve written in your journal. Some people find it beneficial to revisit and analyze past entries. Others find value in NOT re-reading or looking back, but instead letting those prior thoughts stay in the past.

Credit yourself for engaging in this important self-care activity, and remember that there is no wrong way to journal.