

# *Writing Center*

## **Journal Writing Tips for Students**

The word journal comes from a French word meaning “day.” A journal is a daily record of a writer’s thoughts on various topics. However, daily writing is not always necessary.

A journal is usually not meant for publication; in other words, it is a place to explore ideas without concern about the surface elements that make readable to others.

Some teachers assign journals with time criteria. For example, some teachers say to write for ten minutes every day three times a week. Other teachers give no time guidelines. Under these circumstances, students can assign their own time criteria. Establishing a time pattern is often a good idea.

Some teachers assign journals with subject criteria. For instance, these teachers require that students write about computers in their work place or medical issues in the newspaper or economic issues like the ones in the textbook. Other teachers tell students to write about whatever interests them. For these open topics, reflections on community issues or family life or personal relationships or job plans or recreational preferences or school concerns or class assignments are some possible issues to focus on.

A student journal can take many forms. Teachers may require a spiral notebook or a loose-leaf notebook, or they may allow students to choose whatever format they prefer. A double-entry journal is convenient for going back to reflect on and edit journal entries at a later date. Many people, including professional writers, carry small notebooks with them everywhere they go so they can jot down their thoughts and keep a record of them. Even Thomas Edison kept such notebooks—thousands of them—with ideas that led to the many inventions and patents for which he is well known. Perhaps your daily scribbles will become the topics for major breakthroughs in your chosen field.

Date your entries and write down the time. Then, just write. You may wish to free write, putting down everything that you think of without stopping to edit or revise or correct. After all, a personal journal, even for a class, is a place to think through ideas on paper, not a place to polish writing for an audience. If you decide to build on an entry, do it on separate paper. On the other hand, if your teacher wishes you to edit and revise your journal entries, do so according to the class guidelines.

A sample of a double-entry appears on the next page.

### Double-Entry Notes and Journal

Divide paper vertically, creating a 2-to-3-inch column on either the right or the left. Use the larger column for main entries and the smaller column for summaries, comments, reflections, and revisions. Some versions divide the page horizontally instead.

<p>Small section for summaries, comments, reflections, revisions.</p> <p>Teacher emphasized these points—used The Red Wheelbarrow as model.</p> <p>I could write poems like this! It's just a list. And chickens?</p>	<p>Large section for class notes or main journal entries.</p> <p><b><u>Imagism</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Concrete images</b></li><li><b>2. Strong active verbs</b></li><li><b>3. Sound effects emphasized</b></li><li><b>4. Pound, H.D., Hulme, Amy Lowell, Moore</b></li></ol> <p><b>The pictures evolve as the poem progresses. First we see the wheelbarrow, then we see the shiny surface, then we see chickens</b></p>
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<p>Large section for class notes or main journal entries.</p> <p><b><u>Imagism</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>5. Concrete images</b></li><li><b>6. Strong active verbs</b></li><li><b>7. Sound effects emphasized</b></li><li><b>8. Pound, H.D., Hulme, Amy Lowell, Moore</b></li></ol> <p><b>The pictures evolve as the poem progresses. First we see the wheelbarrow, then we see the shiny surface, then we see chickens</b></p>	<p>Small section for summaries, comments, reflections, revisions.</p> <p>Teacher emphasized these points—used The Red Wheelbarrow as model.</p> <p>I could write poems like this! It's just a list. And chickens?</p>
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