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About the Author

Patsy Weedon was introduced to writing a journal by a friend.

Patsy said, "I never really thanked her for that idea. My journals have been very helpful to me!"

Patsy said, "Many people have shared their experience of journaling with me. Almost everyone says they feel it helps them in many ways."

"I want to help people who have not tried journaling or are looking for easier ways to do it and get better results!"

Patsy said, "I know journaling doesn't have to take a lot of time and the benefits can improve many areas of our lives."

Patsy said, "I find it relaxing and love to review what I've written about big events and the small joys we've had which I'd forgotten in the following days."

"Because your journal is private, you can express your true thoughts and sort out the best way forward."

"You're not restricted about what you write or how. You can write with a pen, on your computer or smart device. The electronic devices have many options."

"You can add as much creativity to your journal as you want."

"Everyone's journal is different, personal and unique."

"I want to help people make a journal that reflects and improves their lives!"

Introduction

Journal writing is fun and it is also very useful.

Some people store their thoughts and experiences of people and events which are too personal or detailed for an ordinary diary.

The daily diary is a duty for many people – those who also have journals are usually more relaxed and enthusiastic about themselves and the world they live in.

There are few rules with Journals that can be adapted to your individual needs and desires.

Most people write about their everyday life, goals and challenges.

You can have a journal about different parts of your life:

- ✓ Your Hobbies
- ✓ Your Dreams
- ✓ Your Pets
- ✓ Your Trips

... and include pictures, your own artwork, or any small mementoes to add interest and eye-appeal.

There are many people who use their computer or smart device to record and view their journals. But, probably just as many people feel most comfortable with pen on paper.

I wrote my book to help you produce Journals which reflect your life and your individuality.

I believe my experience and the information friends and colleagues shared with me will help save time, effort and money on your own personal journals.

Patsy Weedon

Myths about Journaling

Myth 1 Journaling is only for self-centered people because it makes us look at everything from its effect on us.

Journaling offers benefits to many types of people.

It actually helps us to see the topics we write about with a wider, inclusive view.

Journaling lets us write our problems and concerns out where we can examine them and our responses.

But, it also lets us record and enjoy again the many happy occasions and relationships which we have had in the past.

Myth 2 You need to be highly creative to benefit from journaling.

Even if you believe you're not creative, you will have some latent ability. This may have been discouraged in your early years but journaling will help you find and develop communication and story-telling. We all can do this well if we give ourselves the chance.

Myth 3: Journals take too much time to produce.

Journals can be written in short periods of time. I recommend just ten to fifteen minute sessions so that you don't become tired or lose concentration.

You control the amount of time you use for your journal. You also control the level of detail which you choose to include.

Myth 4: I don't have anything to write about.

You can write about anything which affects you in a positive or negative way. The journal is a great way to explore topics which are troubling you. You can also use a journal to get a clearer idea about what you really want to achieve in the years to come.

Or, do the exact opposite and put on paper some of your happiest or most exciting times before the memories have faded too much to be easily recalled.

Myth 5: Digital journals are better than written ones.

Either type of journal can be helpful to improving your outlook and increasing your skills.

The advantages of digital journaling on your computer or smart device are that you have the power of the program(s) you use to create your journal.

But, some people claim that we can achieve a more intimate connection with the subject matter when we use a pen and paper.

Myth 6: I should be writing my work material.

Writing your journal entry for 10 minutes will help you write better for work or anything else. That 10 minutes can be a potent answer to writer’s block. Most journal writers don’t have that problem after doing a journal for even a few weeks.

Myth 7: I am not a good writer.

You don’t need to be a good writer because you will probably be the only person to read it. Remember what you write in your journal will probably not be seen by anyone else. And, your ability to write clearly will definitely improve anyway. Most journal writers actually improve their writing ability because of their exposure to journaling.

Myth 8: Writing a Journal is complicated.

Your journal writing does not need to be a complicated process.

The goal of your journaling time is to focus and give you some time away from the stresses of the day.

You can write at whatever pace is comfortable. You can make mistakes without worrying about them, so long as you understand what you write.

Myth 9: Journaling keeps you tied to the Past.

You can write about your past, now or your future in a journal. If you use a journal to detail past experiences and even past disappointments, that can help you to come to terms with them, clear them from your conscious mind and overcome any hold their shadows that have kept affecting you in a negative way.

When you use your journal to examine the experience again, you are not under the pressure that you were before.

You can examine the whole period and find any lessons which can help you. That can be a help to establishing a more positive outlook for your future.

What is a Journal

A journal is a personal, private document where you record your thoughts and reactions to things, experiences and people which make an impact on your life, good or bad.

The purpose is to help you think about challenges and relive your experiences with events and people in your life.

You are in charge of what goes in the journal and how it is expressed.

A traditional journal is written in a book with a pen. There are many other ways that people produce their journals now.

We will explore some of them so that you can decide which will best suit you.

A journal is private and subject to no rules except those the owner sets.

It can be an aid to reflection.

You can also use it to explore your personal desires and any part of your life.

Why Write a Journal?

Many therapists recommend that their clients start writing a journal. I know people that say it can be good for relaxing and reducing fears.

A journal will help to record important events, experiences and people that affect your lives.

We can put details of challenges and opportunities which confront us into our journal so we concentrate on them more clearly.

That lets us examine them more clearly than if we keep them inside our heads.

The entry in the journal can be referred to in the future when we face a similar situation or when you pass on your journal to your family.

We can put in whatever desires we dream of where they cannot be seen or criticized by other people.

Your journal can be a sounding board for ideas which you get that you aren't ready to share with other people.

You can put anything you want to in your journal. Some days, you may write about daily events or plans you have for a holiday. The holiday itself could be the subject of a separate journal, with pictures and other small mementoes included.

I include ideas for new stories in my journal and sometimes actually complete them months later.

Your journal gives you room to include details and thoughts related to the content which can enhance reading the material in the future.

How to Start Your Journal

When you start your first journal, you have no limits about what you can do in it or how you do it.

Deciding what to put in your journal is a problem for some people. They feel that their daily life is not worth recording.

But, you can find some highlights or focus on one aspect of your life.

Some people are not sure that benefits will be worth the time they put into the journal.

You can start with some background about yourself or write something about anything which interests you or even something that is troubling you.

Your journal does not have to be limited to one kind of entry.

If you are a gardener, a poet or an angler, you can focus some pages on those interests.

I suggest that you have a positive focus as much as possible.

This will not only help to keep you motivated to continue with your journal(s), it will make the time you put into the journal pass quickly so you close it and take a smile with you into the rest of the day!

A Gratitude Journal

Many people include something for which they feel gratitude in an entry to their journal each day. It may be the smile their partner gives them over breakfast or an unexpected kindness of a stranger. It can help you maintain your positivity through the day.

A large portion of Journal writers create whole journals which focus on things they are grateful for. They say they benefit greatly from this.

When they feel low, they can flick back through their gratitude journal and read of events and people (as well as pets) that have brightened their lives at various times.

A friend described her gratitude journal she created in a thick line book as powerful but very cheap therapy!

It would cost you very little to try this.

I suggest a separate book just for the gratitude entries.

Make an effort for the first week to write at least 3 entries.

It's good to maintain that sort of routine but don't get uptight if you only do a couple!

Improving Your Journal

The more personal you make your journals, the more interesting you will find them to write and then to delve into at later points in your life.

If you find sometime that your journaling is becoming a chore, it's usually because you're doing the same things each time you open it.

These are some suggestions of ways you can add interest to them with little effort.

And, always remember that you are in charge. You can have a journal-free day to recharge.

But, I suggest that you dip into your journal that day just to read a couple of random entries. That will often give you more incentive to think about what to put in your journal when your day-off is over.

On This Day

On the right top corner of each page, I put the date I make the entry. Just underneath that I list the weather, my mood at the time of making the entry and a one-line joke.

Goal of the Day!

Add a couple of lines at the last part of each day's entry about some small goal you will try to do tomorrow to help someone else. This might be to remember to thank sales staff at the store you get your lunch or, even better, mention how they impress you to their manager when you see that person and are not near the staff member concerned.

That may not seem a great deal but most managers only get complaints about even their best staff! Almost nobody offers sincere thanks.

Try Something New

Add some Art: If you have been doing a text journal, you might want to add some art of your own or clippings from papers, magazines or the Net.

Or, do a little drawing or include a photo you took.

New Journal: You might also want to start a separate journal on a different

area of interest to you.

New Topic: Try a topic different to anything you’ve previously done.

Having a different kind of material or topic from time to time can make it more interesting and lift your enthusiasm for the whole journal again.

You can use your journal to explore your past, your goals and dreams, the people you know or the people you used to know and maybe regret losing track of.

Become More Adept

If you write your journal with a pen, try using your other hand for a section of an entry. This is an exercise which can have benefits if you give it a try for a couple of weeks.

When you start to get to a fair standard with the less dominant hand, you should try a full entry.

You could make that entry about the experiment and what you feel you gained from it.

That would be a great article to share on our website or even maybe in a magazine.

This exercise has significant benefits for many people. They find they can use the newly empowered hand for other things they usually do with the dominant hand.

According to studies, the exercise can also improve some brain function. The regular use, in even short periods, may establish new pathways in your brain.

This could even be part of a journal just about your own exploration of mental exercises and improving your personal creativity.

There are practical benefits from taking this step. Using your less-dominant hand gives you options if, for instance you are in a situation where you cannot use your dominant hand.

What to Write About?

A personal journal should focus on you and your life and those things which you like, dislike and want to help.

That should give you enough ideas for a few years.

But, most of us have days when the topics we want to write about don't give us enough words to fill a minimum sized entry or just don't grab us.

Here are a few suggestions and some suggestions about where to get lots more for the best price – free!

Worries and Fears

The main focus of your personal blog should be positive but not unrealistic.

So, you can use your journal to explore your upsets and fears and try to get a balanced view so you can better deal with them.

Just writing some things out will help your mind to find hints which you may not have remembered when your mind had a lot of doubts and worry in front of everything else.

Another tactic which can help is to write about your successes in your journal so you can remind yourself when you need a bit of a lift.

5 Years Ago – 5 Years Hence

Can you remember what you were doing 5 years ago? What were your circumstances, dreams and expectations? What's improved for you . Is there anything about that time which you remember fondly?

If there is anything that still worries you, you probably should deal with it or, if it's out of reach, just forget it and focus on what you can do now.

When you've thought about that for a minute, you'll probably have enough for a couple of entries at least.

Can you imagine what you might be doing 5 years hence? I hope you can look positively at that future and also be prepared for any challenges that changes in the world might bring.

Five years is a good time to start thinking about that without the need to

start worrying just yet!

Backwards from Success

If you are looking for a way to achieve a major goal but it seems there is no path, try a tip which I heard in a marketing seminar 10 years ago. The speaker said that if she could not see a way forward, she would sit down, close her eyes and bring up a vision of her at the point where she had succeeded reaching that goal.

I want you to keep your eyes open and write down how you would feel when you reach that point.

Then, start thinking and writing about what you believe were the steps to get there!

Sometimes, that mental twist will give a few ideas which could help you move forward.

Dreams

Some people believe dreams have messages for us, others think they are mental fluff discarded by our subconscious.

Use your recollections of them to explore those theories or just record the content you remember and try to connect it to parts of your life.

Or, you can use the dreams category to think about finding greater success and happiness in your future!

Pets

Every type of pet is a great topic for a journal of its own.

Your children might even be interested in doing a journal about their pet(s) with or without your help.

Children often make up stories and that helps them to deal with problems.

Making a journal is a great way to exercise that imagery and doing it with a computer is almost as good as doing it with pens, paper and lots of color!

Hobbies

A separate journal about your experience, expertise and experiences with

your hobby and other hobbyists could be a good topic.

Many journals on these topics have been the seed of someone’s book later on.

And, many journals have become treasured family possessions after their writers have passed them on.

Looking Back to Plan Ahead

Looking through your older entries in your journal can be a rewarding and confidence-building experience.

Usually, this gives us a chance to be encouraged by the reminders of past victories which we have probably forgotten.

We will also see that old problems which we may still feel sad or angry about are beyond our influence. And, more importantly, we cannot be harmed by those problems unless we choose to be!

Then we can see any lessons or ideas in what we wrote more clearly.

And that will help us to move forward.

Diary, Blog, Memoir or a Journal?

These methods of recording information and events have some basic features in common but are meant for different purposes.

Diaries are for recording activities, expenses and events like appointments on a daily basis.

They are limited to a set format and amount of space for your entries.

You cannot miss a day filling out your diary without some downside.

The limited space restricts the amount of information you can include.

Video Diaries are collections of videos you create and store. These are usually intended for personal use and may be shared with a few people.

A **blog** is a website feature where you post information, articles and other material for viewing, comment, and sharing by people that visit your web site.

Some blogs include areas which are restricted from being viewed by people who have not supplied their contact details to you.

A **memoir** is a record of somebody’s life or particular experiences which they had. It is intended for wide distribution. Some people use material from journals which they made earlier to produce a memoir for wider distribution.

Your journal can be done in whatever way suits you and your lifestyle.

Types of Journals

The traditional journal was a book of handwritten notes. Some were written in great detail and have become valuable resources for historical or family research.

Written journals are often enhanced by decorations and photos.



Art Journals

Some people who do their own art may produce journals which included artwork is as important as the text.

Anyone can make their own art journal. It can add appeal to the journal and give the artist a way to explore their latent art ability.

Audio journals

Audio journals are done with an audio recorder, the microphone in your computer or an app on your smart device. The recordings may just be for your personal pleasure or they may be distributed online or displayed on sites like www.youtube.com.

This option is good for people that are better speakers than writers or just prefer the audio. You may also want to have a printed transcript available or an Adobe Acrobat version for download.

The cheapest way to get a transcript is to do it yourself. This needs a lot of practice. Expect errors when you first try to do one.

You can order transcripts from online services as well.

Or, you can use a program like Dragon Naturally Speaking to convert the audio to a text file. This will not be a perfect copy unless you put some time into training the software program.

Video Journals

These are increasing in popularity with the spread of smarter hand-held devices with reasonable quality cameras and applications available online.

The video journals can be more interesting to watch but there is a learning curve with the various programs used to record and edit them..

Always backup your files and store a copy of important ones away from your computer.



Digital Journals

With every advance in the smart phone and smarter device markets, new ways to produce and enhance digital journals appear.

The development is rapid and exciting (or exhausting if you have

been here since pen and paper were the only sort of journal!)

The development of apps (applications) for the main platforms (computing systems) has made it much easier for smart developers to produce and sell their digital products for the various platforms.

Journals for Writers

There are hundreds of books to help you improve your writing skills.

There is one I use and strongly recommend which only costs about 75 cents.

That’s a journal!

I base that on Stephen King’s advice that to be a writer, you must do two things above all others. "You must read a lot and write a lot."

Most working writers have said something similar.

A journal is easy to write, because there aren’t any grammar police looking over your shoulder and you can keep the content private.

And, I’ll guarantee that if you go the journal route for at least 6 months, your writing will improve.

Mine did.

You don’t have to write a lot for each journal entry, so this is a good way to defeat writer’s block.

If you can’t get started with your writing, grab your smart device or your note book and pen and start writing your daily entry.

By the time you’ve finished that, you will be primed to write some good stuff for your next story, article, or whatever.

Thousands of Topics

Whether you’re wanting to write a story or a journal entry, you may have days when you think, “I can’t think of anything to write about.”

Journal writing makes that a hard excuse to believe.

When you have done, say, two weeks of entries, you have started to build a store of topics which you can browse through and twist around to make new entries about.

For instance, if you wrote a couple of hundred words about having fun in your canoe, you can make another of your entries by writing about when you had your first canoe lesson or the time it tipped over.

Another endless source of topics are the magazines and blogs which you find online.

Most of them, whether focused on business or babies, carry articles which are lists of possibly interesting, surefire ways to make all the hippopotamuses in your area fall in love with you or make your child eat carrots like they were ice-cream!

I suggest that you gather these lists and look for items which relate to some of the topics you mention in your journal.

Then, write your own suggestions up. They won’t all be good but will give you something to start from when your mental starter motor is slow to turn over.

I suggest that you only use the topics from the other sources sparingly. You may have some days when you really can’t get any topics of your own.

Then, you can use the borrowed ones for starting you journal entry and put your own spin on them.

Your local newspaper is another source of ideas for your entries.

Everybody that you meet in the course of an average day has interesting things in their mind or their experience which could be the subject of a journal entry.

These are two ideas which I used some time back for one of my journals.

I typed the sentence at the top of a page and then used the topic to detail my experience with people where I either spoke to them or just smiled.

1: If you talk to one new person a day, some will not respond but others will improve your life!

2: One way to improve the world you live in is to interact more with it. Just give someone a genuine smile and improve their day!

I enjoyed the varied reactions I got and I have continued to use this approach.

Resources

Any use of links by anyone is entirely at their own risk.

Mindlogr

Private Video Diary, Video Journal and Video storage service. Cloud based. This is a relatively new service, still adding services and features. Free and premium (\$5 month) memberships.

<https://www.mindlogr.com>

Resources for Journal Writers on DMOZ.

[www.dmoz.org/Arts/Online Writing/Journals/Resources](http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Online_Writing/Journals/Resources)

DMOZ is a free, human assembled directory of the Internet. Since it is maintained by volunteers, it is not always right up to date.

Some links may be useless or even risky.

Using the past to Improve Your Future

I hope the information and suggestions have helped to get you started with your new journal (s).

I have found many people benefit from their using this easy and cheap tool to improve their outlook and their results.

That’s what I wish for you. Start your journaling now so you’ll be ready for the new ways of doing it which are already on the horizon.

Patsy Weedon

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