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How to
**USE A
JOURNAL**

The Really Useful Guide

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How To Use A Journal

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Introduction

One question I am often asked is “What will help me make a real difference in my life?”
My guidance when asked this question is – “*make regular use of a journal*”.

One of my mentors, the late Jim Rohn, a few years ago, brought out an excellent [audio presentation](#) about “*How to Use a Journal*”. In this audio he gives a passionate plea and clear argument for using a journal to lead you to your success. I recommend listening to this audio daily for a week and then once a week for a month as it is very easy to lapse in this very simple way of helping yourself.

You must start developing the journal habit very quickly and carry on using the journal – writing it all down really does make a difference. It helps with personal growth. In fact your journal can help you take control of your life.

As the businessman and dragon, James Caan, says – “*always ask, What can I do for myself*” – one thing you can do for yourself is ‘*use a journal whenever you feel the need to capture it all*’.

Your journal should be with you always . Let others try to remember it all and treat opportunity casually – treat opportunity seriously - soak up ideas – use your journal. Get serious about capturing it now – not recording scattered fragments at the end of the day – get it down straight away.

There really is no time like the present.

Chapter 1 – Why Use a Journal

Only about 10% of the population has written goals and only about 1% use a journal to record them. So congratulations as when you start using your journal you will be one of a self-selected few.

Your journal should never be confused with a diary. A diary is used nowadays as a forward planning tool, recording future events and appointments. Your journal is your tool for personal discovery, the place to keep ideas, and a place to analyse those ideas and form fresh ideas.

The fact is that writing things down in your journal etches ideas and information more firmly in your conscious mind. Not all your ideas will be workable now but when you review your journals you will come across many ideas that have matured as you have.

KEY POINT: EVERY IDEA HAS ITS TIME AND PLACE

Quote: Victor Hugo

“There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

Perhaps the ideas you capture today may not have any specific meaning or purpose in your life at this moment but the ideas you have collected may be useful in the future and as we collect a variety of ideas and thoughts on any given theme or subject the ideas may come together and form different ideas. Gathering enough solid blocks – solid blocks make a new future.

Everyday Use

Recording your life is chaotic and therefore a filing system is required and this is your journal. It allows you to assemble the thoughts / information that has come your way. An index at the back of each volume can be useful. Just list the highlights of your entries – with page numbers. To cut down any chaos within the journal it is suggested setting aside certain sections for goals, quotes, new speeches, ongoing projects, problems and anything else you want to record. Remember it is your book – you decide what, when, where and how you record your life.

You have the added benefit of being able to review your ideas whenever you wish – no running back to the library or reconstructing conversations.

Failure more often than not is due to lack of information about how to succeed or proceed – you can get the information from your journal so the information can be put to practical use. Unfortunately most people do not record this raw material.

Quote: William James

“The most immutable barrier in nature is between one man’s thoughts and another’s.”

Writing in your journal will give you better communication skills.

Your journal is a textbook for your life – capture all your experiences.

You may ask – How often shall I be writing?

- never writing is bad as you will be participating without capturing
- constantly writing is bad as you will be capturing without participating
- get in the habit of carrying your journal – think *“I am a conscious observer and participant in life“*

Chapter 2 – What Kind of Book to Use as a Journal

What kind of book can be used as a journal you may wonder?

Any book can be used – lined, unlined, large and small – you will have different journals and methods over the years. It is your choice how to record your life – it can be in the written word, drawings, or even clippings pasted into it.

The only thing to remember is the journal needs to go where you go. I use pocket journals mostly and will go up to an A5 book as I carry my journal in my coat pocket. A good idea is to not make it too large as it will fall into disuse and be neglected if it cannot fit into a briefcase or bag.

Your journal needs to be used in real-time – what you record cannot be filled in retrospectively. This is your place to shine. Your unique ideas are stored in this place – a place for million pound ideas.

Chapter 3 – What to Record in Your Journal

I tend to record everything and anything that happens to me or interests me in my journal.

I use the Journal Key below to help me locate the various entries. It is also a good idea to list the page numbers against each Journal Key at the front of the book and have an index of useful topics you have made entries for at the back.

When making an entry record the Date, Time, Location and source of the information being recorded. This becomes important later on when you want to use the information at a later date.

Each Journal Key has a specific role to play.

Date / Time / Location / Source
Journal Key
JE - Journal Entry
ME - Media Entry
PE - Project Entry
JI - Journal Insight / Idea
MI - Media Insight / Idea
PI - Project Insight / Idea
MD - MuDi (Goals - Wishes - LOA)
TD - To Do

JE – Journal Entry

This is used for any entry that originates from your life experience. Your interactions with other people and things. This could be the most used Journal Key for you.

ME – Media Entry

This is used for recording information from any external source that you encounter – books, tv, movies, radio shows etc. In fact any media type can be recorded in your journal.

PE – Project Entry

This is used for recording information on any projects you are working on. Record anything that comes up whilst working on a project.

JI – Journal Insight / Idea

This is used for recording ideas and insights that come to you from your life experience.

MI – Media Insight / Idea

This is used for recording ideas and insights that come to you from reading, watching or listening to something.

PI – Project Idea / Insight

This is used for recording any more ideas that come to you whilst you are working on projects. It could be about the current project or an idea that comes to you for another or future project.

MD – MuDi (Goals / Wishes / Law of Attraction)

The Chinese characters 目的 gave me the name for this Journal Key. They stand for Purpose, Aim, Goal, Target and Objective. Use MD for anything that you want to achieve in life.

TD – To DO

This is self evident – depending on how proactive you are this could be used more often than JE. Record everything you need to do.

Of course you may be confused and hesitant to start a journal and ask “*what am I supposed to write?*”

- The thing to remember is that it is your book – this is not going to be seen or graded as a piece of work, and as such you can break every grammatical rule you can remember from school.

- Your journal offers you an effective way to figure it all out – yourself – people - business.

You could start by writing down a problem – the objective perspective the writing it down gives you:

- space so that solutions have room to grow
- non-distorted information as it is more factual – no distorted picture of events – no mind tricks

Become a more effective thinker on paper:

- write down problems you encounter and all the steps you take to solve them and the eventual outcomes
- capture
 - good ideas
 - unique quotes
 - an interesting piece of information
 - a personal discovery

The human memory is not designed to accurately remember it all objectively.

Often we re-remember things and events once new information is added to our memory. We re-define events and emotions as we learn more about the world. You cannot remember it ‘*as it is*’ but you can record it in your journal ‘*as it is*’ and it will be there for all time.

Quote: Ralph Waldo Emerson

“I suppose every old scholar has had the experience of reading something in a book which was significant to him, but which he could never find again. Sure he is that he read it there, but no one else ever read it, nor can he find it again, though he buy the book and ransack every page.”

What we do not accurately capture today is lost forever – we are nowadays experiencing information overload – there are so many sources of insight and inspiration that surround us and good ideas flow in abundance from all kinds of media:

- sermons
- books
- TV

Your journal is your textbook of self discovery

- record observations and reactions – between what we have seen and what we do is who we are
- describe what you see and hear – include touch and feelings
- it does not need to be a special event – minor events can influence your life
- cause and effect can be recorded – human emotions are effects that have causes

When you open up and tell it like it is then your journal starts to become your friend who will listen to all you have to say about your joys, pain, fears and concerns:

- get your emotions out of your head onto paper
- strong negative emotions are diminished by writing them down
- powerful positive emotions become explosive
- writing about your fear reduces its strength
- capturing your excitement magnifies its power

Break All the Rules

- write freely

- break all the rules of grammar
- draw pictures
- say it all
- glue in newspaper articles
- use other people's words

Record the date / time / location of your entry as this:

- provides a measure of your life
- where and when you write can reveal revelations
- everything affects everything else
- the books, TV, conversations you are exposed to all affect you

Journals reflect mental changes:

- your journal gives you an opportunity of talking with yourself
- posing and responding about your past – present and future
- personal understanding and awareness
- a positive inside affects outside

We are truly still in the dark ages in saying what we mean and understanding the meaning of what is being said.

Chapter 4 – Using Your Journal for Goal Setting

At the end of November 2012, I saw James Caan speaking about his thirty years in business – so many insightful words lost to many who attended – why? I was writing as fast as I could in my journal – when I did come up for air and looked around about 90% were just listening – only a few were using a journal. Those 10% will be the successful ones – others will wonder how they became so “lucky”.

Remember what was said by James Caan in the Introduction above? If you used your journal recording the information contained on that page it would be in front of you now in your journal. For those not recording this, James Caan said, “always ask, *What can I do for myself*” – using a journal to figure out that statement will make you a success. I was still recording the information he was sharing even though I was one of the first to buy his book “*Start Your Business in 7 Days*” – being there I had to record his words in my journal as a Media Entry (ME). I was there to learn from him, not for entertainment. My journal is used constantly.

The diagram here shows how your journal entries can come together and form more useful ideas.



Let this mind-map help you navigate your journal entries.

Make a firm commitment now that you will open your journal and write at least one page:

- write about a problem you are facing – capture it on paper the way it really is
- carefully analyse what you have written
- look for distortions and imaginations of what is written
- blaming others when it is your fault
- expecting others or circumstances to change

Things get better when you get better – no passive hope:

- look closely for weak points in the obstacle as a few minor adjustments can solve a major problem – use the microscope of truth.
- record your investigations.
- record the ultimate conclusion to your problem – does it work well or if you have learned a lesson if it does not.

KEY POINT: BECOMING A MORE EFFECTIVE THINKER ON PAPER IS THE BEST WAY OF BECOMING A MORE EFFECTIVE PERSON IN PRACTICE

Chapter 5 – Ongoing Use of Your Journals

Writing in journals is capturing information. It is by re-reading your journals that you begin the process of translating information into practical knowledge:

- one day each week to review your recent entries in your current journal
- one day each month review that years journals
- one day each year review all of your journals – all years

KEY POINT: FOR YOUR JOURNALS TO HAVE THEIR GREATEST VALUE THEY MUST BE FREQUENTLY REVIEWED

Conclusion

Remember your journal should be with you always . Let others try to remember it all and treat opportunity casually – treat opportunity seriously - soak up ideas – use your journal. Get serious about capturing it now – not recording scattered fragments at the end of the day – get it down straight away.

There really is no time like the present.

Discipline yourself to get started:

- we all know what is good for us but somehow we fool ourselves we will start it tomorrow
- the decision and the action must come from you

What is your first entry:

- how it is for you at this time in your life?
- life, job, marriage, etc – tell it like it is
- chart out a course of action to solve an obstacle
- examine your progress.
- explain why you bought the journal in the first place
- was it a response to a specific need

Life and your journals provide a space to fill as you wish:

- not sure how you wish to fill your life – paint pictures in your journal
- place yourself in the middle of your creation and see how you feel
- design an ideal lifestyle and then set your goals and plans of action
- paint your mental pictures in your journal and then build that life
- set yourself free with paper and pen and expand your inner horizons and new experiences

Quotes: W. Clement Stone

“Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”

Book of Proverbs chapter 23 verse 7

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

Whatever you create on the pages of your journal you can achieve with enough belief, commitment, discipline and desire

IF IT’S HAPPENING – RECORD IT NOW!

Check out further resources [here](#).

TMC – fostering intelligence

Today, how would you like to:

- achieve your goals
- overcome your challenges / fears
- change your life

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