# How to Write a Journal Entry

Keeping a journal allows you to record what's happening in your life and to work through your thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, you might write a journal for school to help you deepen your understanding of what you're studying. Fortunately, writing a journal entry is a simple process. First, choose a topic to write about, like what's happening in your life. Then, write an opening for your entry and express your thoughts.

Method 1

Choosing a Topic

1.
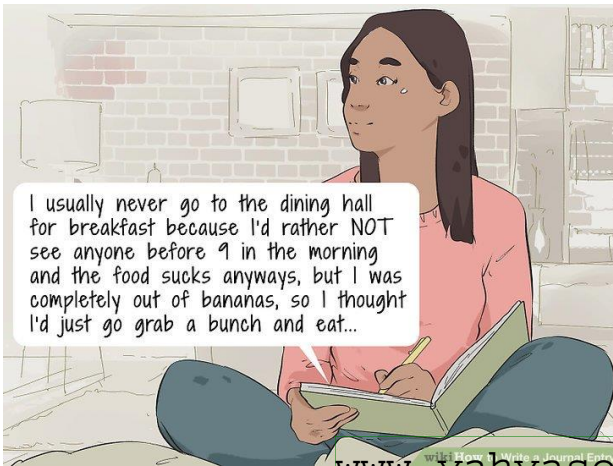
1

Write about what's going on in your life. This includes things like the activities you're doing, events that happen, and accomplishes you make. Use your journal to record what your life is like right now so you can look back on it later.[1]

- o This is a great way to help you document things you want to remember.
- o For instance, you might write about something funny that happened at lunch, scoring the winning goal in a soccer game, or a fight you had with your friend. The events can be positive or negative.

2.

2

Explore your emotions or how you feel about something. Write about what you're going through, how you feel, and what you hope will happen in the future. Let your journal be an emotional release for you so that you can deal with your emotions better.[2]

  o Let's say you're feeling sad because you're going through a breakup. You could write about how you feel and what you'll miss about the relationship. This will help you release your feelings so you can start to feel better.

3.
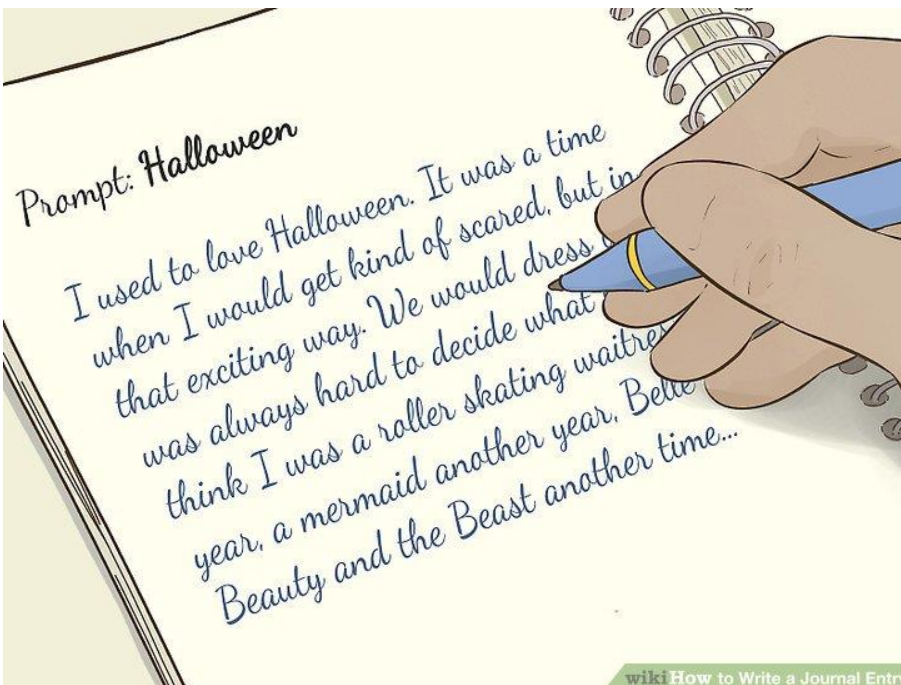
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Use a writing prompt if you aren't sure what to write about. If you're trying to get in the habit of journaling or have to keep a personal journal for school, writing prompts can help you find something to write about. Look for prompts online, then pick 1 that triggers your imagination. Here are some prompts to get you started:[3]

- o Write about what you'd like to do this weekend.
- o Discuss a place you'd like to visit.
- o Pretend that you found a fantasy creature.
- o Write about something you want to change.
- o Write from the perspective of your favorite book or movie character.

4.

4

Record your reactions to readings and lectures in an academic journal. If you're keeping a journal for high school or college, write about your coursework. This includes readings, lectures, and class discussions. Additionally, discuss your thoughts about what you're learning. Here are some things to include in a journal entry for school:[4]

- o A summary of a reading or lecture.
- o Your analysis of the course material.
- o Connections between topics you've studied.
- o Personal connections you made with the coursework.
- o Questions you have about the text or lecture.

Tip: Keep a journal for school focused on studying and analyzing your course material. For instance, you might summarize your coursework, record your reflections on it, and write down questions you have. Leave out how you feel about what you're reading or studying.

Method 2

Opening Your Journal Entry

1.

1

Read your assignment sheet if you're keeping a journal for school. Review the assignment sheet at least twice to make sure you fully understand what your instructor expects. If you have questions, ask your instructor as soon as possible so that you aren't doing your assignment wrong. This will ensure that you get full credit for your work.[5]

- o Your instructor has assigned journaling to help you deepen your understanding of your coursework and to improve your writing skills. Following their instructions will help you best achieve these goals.

2.

July 24, 2019

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2

Write the date at the top of your entry. Including the date helps you keep track of when you wrote an entry. This helps you understand what was happening at your life at the time. Use the date format you're most comfortable using.[6]

 o   For instance, you might write, "July 24, 2019," "07-24-19," or "24 July 2019."

3.

3

Include the location and time to provide context for what was happening. While this is optional, it can help you remember what was happening at the time you wrote each entry. This is a big help if you plan to read over your journal in the future. Record the location and time under your date or at the start of the journal entry itself.[7]

 o   For instance, you might write "Good Beans Coffee House," "School," "Paris," or "My bedroom" for your location. For the time, you could write the actual time, such as "12:25 p.m.," or the time of day, like "Early morning."
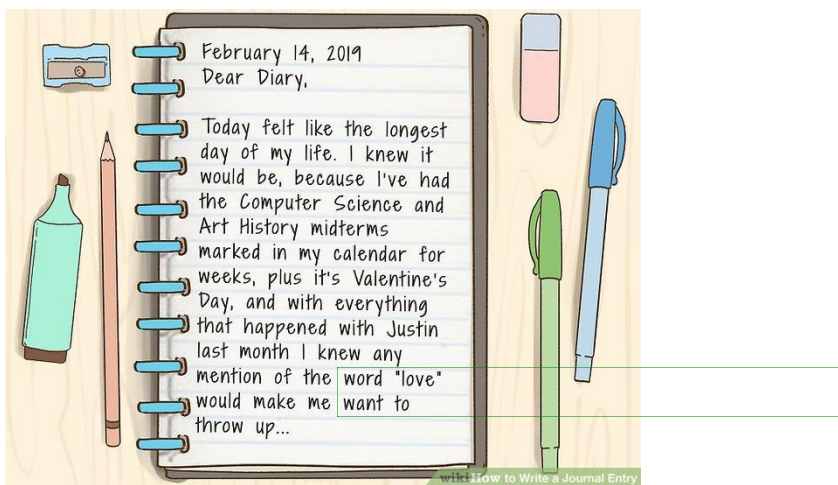
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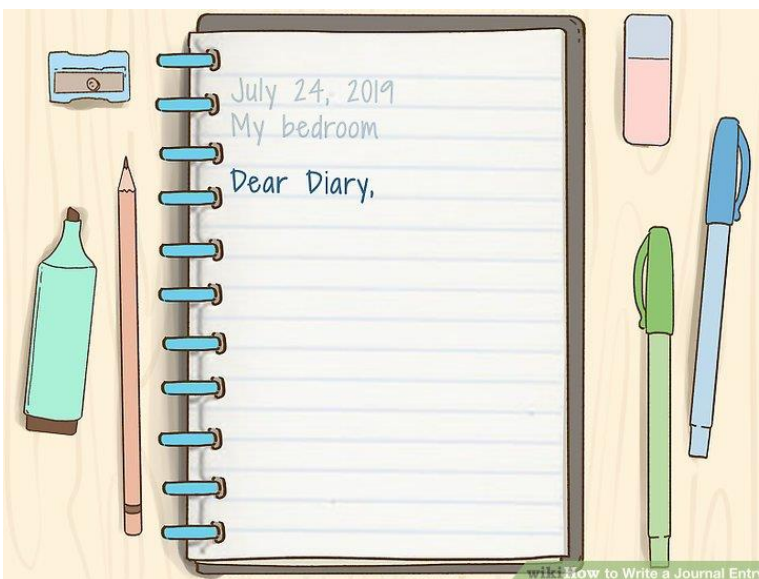
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Start with an opening like "Dear Diary" or "Dear Self" if you prefer. Using a salutation is totally optional, so feel free to skip it. However, you might try it a few times to see if it helps you get in the mindset to write. Choose a salutation that appeals to you if you want to use one.[8]

Tip: You usually don't include a salutation when you're writing a journal for school.

Method 3

Expressing Yourself in a Personal Journal

1.

February 14, 2019
Dear Diary,

Today felt like the longest day of my life. I knew it would be, because I've had the Computer Science and Art History midterms marked in my calendar for weeks, plus it's Valentine's Day, and with everything that happened with Justin last month I knew any mention of the word "love" would make me want to throw up...

1

Don't worry about grammar and spelling rules. Give yourself permission to make mistakes as you write your journal entry. This is for you, so it doesn't matter if something is written incorrectly. Just let your thoughts flow freely onto the paper.[9]

  o If mistakes really bother you, it's okay to go back and correct them after you finish writing your journal entry.

2.

2

Be creative in how you write your posts if you like. You can use any format for writing your posts, so play around with different structures. This can help you keep up with your writing habit because it provides you the freedom to do what comes naturally that day. For instance, you could try the following:[10]

- o   Turn a memory into a story.
- o   Record what you dreamed last night.
- o   Write a list, such as what you did that day or what you're grateful for.
- o   Doodle or paste pictures into your journal.
- o   Record song lyrics or quotes that mean something to you.
- o   Write your own lyrics or a poem.
- o   Write in stream of consciousness.

3.
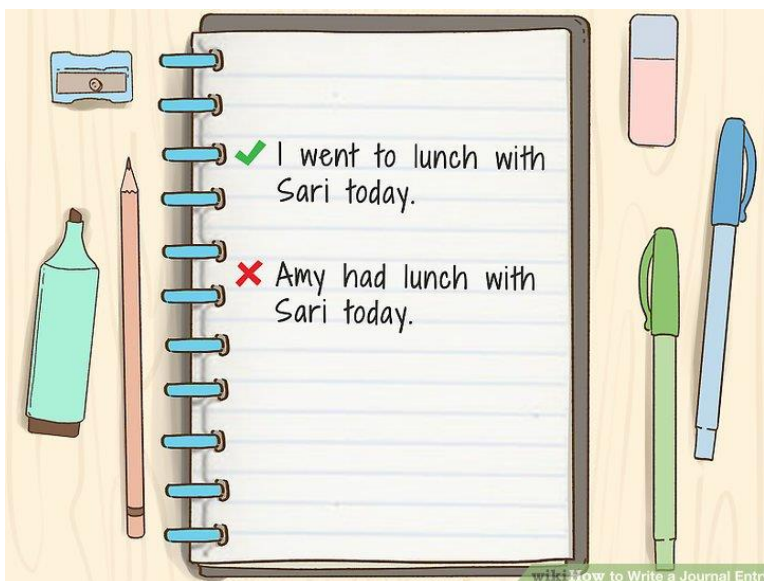
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Use "I" to write your journal in the first person. You're writing about your thoughts, experiences, and reflections, so don't worry about putting them in third person. It's okay to write your journal entries using the pronoun "I" unless you just prefer not to do so.[11]

- o   For instance, you'd write, "I went to lunch with Sari today," not "Amy had lunch with Sari today."

4.
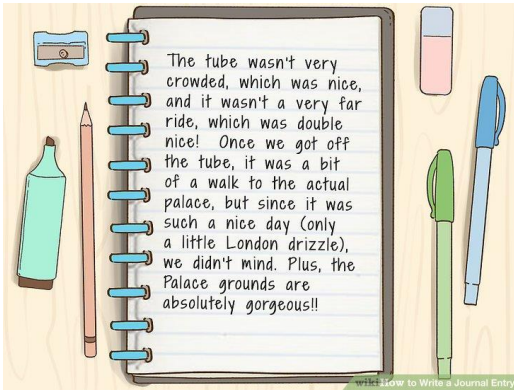
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Incorporate details that appeal to your 5 senses to make your post vivid. This is optional, but it can make your journal entries more interesting and can help you remember what happened. Think about what you saw, heard, smelled, felt, and tasted during the events or experiences that you're writing about. Then, include some of these details in your entry.[12]

- o   For instance, let's say you're on vacation at the beach. You might include details like, "sea spray hitting my face," "the smell of burning wood from bonfires on the beach," "the taste of salt on my lips," "the sun glinting off the surface of the water," and "the shouts from other beach goers having fun."

5.

5
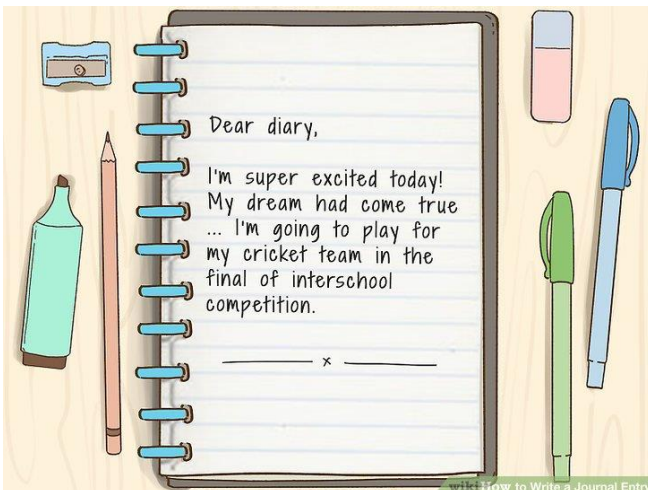
Don't worry about the length of your journal entries. You don't need to fill out an entire page every time you write. It's okay to have some short entries and some longer entries. Write down what you have to say. If you're having trouble thinking of something else to write, go ahead and end your entry.[13]

- o With journaling, it's more important to write often than to write a lot.

Method 4

Drafting an Academic Journal Entry

1.

1

Organize your thoughts to make them coherent. A journal entry doesn't need to be as organized as an essay, even if it's for school. However, it should be possible to follow your train of thought. Use sentences to express your thoughts, and start a new paragraph when you switch to a new idea.[14]

- o If you're telling a story, try to follow a narrative structure to give it a beginning, middle, and end.
- o Read over your journal entry before your submit it to check that it makes sense.

2.

2.Make sure you reach the required word count. Check your assignment sheet to find out if your instructor requires journal entries to be a certain length. If they do, make sure you reach the correct word count so you get full credit. Use the word count tool on your word processor or count your words if you hand wrote your entry.[15]

- o For handwritten journals, your instructor may require that you simply fill up a page. Make sure you know the exact requirements so you can do your assignment correctly.
- o If you're struggling to think of something to write, make a mind map about the topic to help you brainstorm some new ideas.

3.

3.**Use proper grammar** **like you would in an essay.** Always follow grammar rules when you're writing a journal for school. Use proper capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure throughout your journal entry. Otherwise, you may lose credit.[16]

- o If you're struggling with your grammar, visit your school's writing center or ask your instructor about tutoring options. Additionally, you can find online programs that help you with grammar.

4.

4.**Proofread your journal entry and correct any mistakes.** Since your journal is part of a school assignment, it needs to be free of errors. Read over your journal entry at least twice to check it for errors. Then, make any necessary corrections.[17]

- o This is especially important if you're keeping your journal as a graded assignment.
- o If you're typing your journal entries in an online portal, there may be a spellcheck tool you can use. However, you should still proofread the entry to look for other errors.