



NO. 15 IN THE WRITING CENTER HANDOUT SERIES

Journal Writing: A Process of Reaction

Journal entries should record your reaction to an assignment. Rather than summarizing the material or expressing an emotional opinion, they should evaluate the text, pose questions, connect to personal experiences, and transform the original work into a new way of thinking and writing about the topic at hand. While this five-step model should help to organize your ideas, it is only one approach to journal writing.

RECORD.

- Include notes and specific information from the reading. Provide the author's name and article title. Pull a quotation from the text or point to a particular part of the assignment. Tell the reader what your response is about. Be brief, and do not summarize.
- What are your goals for the journal entry? What topics are most interesting, provoking, or challenging to you?

EVALUATE.

- Discuss likes and dislikes, difficulties encountered through the reading, and opinions in response to the text. Assess the assignment as a reader.
- Were you attracted to a particular section of the article? Why? Does the writing resemble works you have read in this or other classes? Did the author clearly explain his or her position, research, or theory? Do you agree with conclusions the author has made?

ASK.

- Raise questions about new or unique ideas and information. Question research methods and make hypotheses.
- What is still confusing or unclear in the reading? What would you like to know more about?

CONNECT.

- Make connections between the reading and your personal experiences, knowledge, background, current and previous studies, and current events. Look for ways in which the text's subject parallels or connects to other academic areas.
- What examples or theories from the reading relate to your personal experiences in school, family, friendships, work, or other areas of life?

TRANSFORM.

- Reconstruct the data through drawings, charts, sketches, maps, graphs, or timelines. Make the text your own through unique ways of expression. Look at the reading through a new lens. Explore practical implications of new knowledge, and propose further research topics.
- How is the text relevant to other facets of your life? How would you communicate this knowledge to others? Could a map, graph, or chart represent this information in a new way?

Adapted from
Popp, Marcia S. *Learning Journals in the K-8 Classroom: Exploring Ideas and Information in the Content Areas*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.
For more information on journal writing, see
The St. Martin's Handbook (5th ed): 364-7