

Sample 2-page Journal Entry in Response to a Question Prompt

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English 151A – Greg

Journal #1: Journal Writing Tips

Question: After they've read one of the short essays at the end of *A Writer's Workplace*, what are some good journal writing tips that I can give to my students in order to make this exercise useful to them?

The word journal comes from a French word meaning "day." A journal is a daily record of a writer's thoughts on various topics. One of the best reasons for writing a journal is for the exercise. If you want to lift weights, you must practice daily. To improve your writing, exercise is needed. 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 writing readable to others. Some teachers assign journals with time criteria. For example, some teachers say to write for ten minutes every day or 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 the 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. Please do keep in mind that your instructor does not evaluate this based on if you "spill your guts" or not. 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. Consider writing test

questions in your journal based on what was covered in class or use it to remember questions to address in class.

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 scribblings 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 journal follows. 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.

Small section for summaries, comments, reflections, revisions.
Teacher emphasized these points-- used "The Red Wheelbarrow" as model. I could write poems like this! It's just a list. And chickens? The pictures evolve as the poem progresses. First we see the wheelbarrow, then we see the shiny surface, then we see chickens.

Small section for summaries, comments, reflections, revisions.

Large section for class notes or main journal entries.
Imagism 1. Concrete images 2. Strong active verbs 3. Precise nouns 4. Sound effects emphasized 5. Pound, H.D., Hulme, Amy Lowell, Moore

Large section for class notes or main journal entries. Imagism 1. Concrete images 2. Strong active verbs 3. Precise nouns 4. Sound effects emphasized 5. Pound, H.D., Hulme, Amy Lowell, Moore The pictures evolve as the poem progresses. First we see the wheelbarrow, then we see the shiny surface, then we see chickens