InsightTimer

How to Start Journaling: A Simple Guide for Building a Healthy Habit

With companion Practices

Created in collaboration with the Jed Foundation

10 free tracks

Journaling offers a simple, low-pressure way to slow down, process your thoughts, and clear mental clutter. It doesn't have to be time-consuming or perfect to be helpful. This worksheet breaks journaling into approachable steps to help you get started and build a habit that supports emotional well-being.

Tips to Start Journaling

Tip 1: Start Simple

If you're not sure what to write, begin with something easy and low-pressure. A short gratitude list, a few words about how your day felt, or one thing on your mind is enough. Starting small helps reduce resistance and makes journaling feel more approachable.

Tip 2: Choose a Time and Create Consistency

Pick a time of day that works naturally for you. Writing in the evening can help you reflect, process emotions, and release lingering thoughts before sleep. Mornings may help you set intentions and mentally prepare for the day. There's no "right" time. Consistency matters more than when or how long you write.

Tip 3: Let It Flow

Your journal isn't a school assignment or something that needs to sound polished. Forget grammar, structure, or making it make sense to anyone else. Let your thoughts come out as they are. Journaling is about creating inner clarity, not a finished product.

Tip 4: Capture Thoughts Throughout the Day

Thoughts and feelings often show up when you're not sitting down to journal. Having a place to capture them - a notes app, small notebook, or voice memo - can help reduce mental clutter and make your journaling sessions feel more focused later on.

Tip 5: Don't Limit Yourself to Words

Journaling can include more than writing. You might draw, doodle, make lists, add photos, or paste in quotes that resonate with you. Your journal should reflect how you process experiences, not how you think you're supposed to journal.

Guiding Prompts for Everyday Journaling

Use these prompts as a starting point. You can answer one right now, write a few words, or return to them whenever you need direction.

1. What's taking up the most space in my mind right now?

2. How am I feeling today, emotionally and physically?

3. What's one moment from today I want to reflect on?

4. What felt grounding or supportive today?

5. What do I need more of right now?

6. What's something small I'm grateful for in this moment?

☰ Further Reflection