



What is An Art Journal?



An art journal is a truly personal thing, a way of expressing yourself that is uniquely your own. There is no right or wrong way to keep an art journal and they are used in many different ways. To experiment with different techniques, to process complex emotions, to record your daily life and experiences. They can be a dumping ground for ideas, or to gather inspiration.

I personally believe that a creative outlet is essential in our lives. This could be something arty but it could be something else. Perhaps you love to bake or enjoy a spot of gardening, whatever it is that brings you a sense of calm and wellbeing, being creative is so good for the soul.

This image shows a highly textured and layered collage mounted on a notebook page. The collage includes several pieces of patterned paper, such as pink paper with black polka dots and brown paper with white polka dots. There are also pieces of fabric, including a blue and white plaid material and a green fringed fabric. A small photograph of a woman's face is visible at the bottom right. The collage is held together by various fasteners like staples and string. The background is a notebook page with handwritten notes and a grid pattern. The word "that" is printed vertically on the right side of the page. The overall aesthetic is artistic and experimental.

What Do I Need To Get Started?



Well of course you need a journal! You can buy one, make one, paint over an old book or magazine. Choose something that suits you and your lifestyle. If you don't have much space or time, choose something small that you can slip into a bag and take along with you. Or perhaps you love to be big and bold and want space to be expressive! Then choose something larger that you can leave open on a desk to inspire you.

Aside from the journal, literally anything goes! But here are a few things I like to have on hand:

- Gesso - an artist's primer. Used to protect pages so mediums don't soak through. It makes your paint go further and can be used thinly to mute colours or thickly to add texture.
- A pen you like - I like a dip pen with some liquid ink to write or draw into my journals

- A pencil
- Acrylics - choose a few colours you like
- Watercolours or inks - these add lovely translucent layers to your pages
- Collage scraps - I love adding collage for pattern, and texture. I always keep scraps of papers I come across that have an interesting pattern or colour
- Glue - a glue stick is good, I also like a liquid glue (matt medium is my go to) and a strong craft glue like fabritac
- Found images and words - words and sentences from old books and magazines are great to use and I also save images I like from books and magazines. I love collecting old photos to use in my journals
- Stencils - a great way to add some pattern to your pages
- Stamps - either bought or hand carved these are great to add to pages
- Pastels - I use both soft and oil pastels to add some interesting marks to my pages



Where Do I Begin?



Sometimes the most difficult thing is where to start. Here are a few ideas to get you thinking. Pick one...think about what you might write, what pictures or images you may use, what colours would work well.

A few ways to add colour

- Use your fingers
- Scrape paint on with an old card
- Use pastels or crayons
- Add a light washy look with watercolours
- Use collage - rip an old magazine up and glue it down

A few ways to add texture

- Collage
- Stencils
- Texture pastes

- Fabric scraps
- Napkins, tissue paper, paper towels etc

A few ways to add words

- Stamps
- Cut out of magazines, newspapers, books etc
- Handwritten
- Painted
- stickers

A few ways to add an image

- Photo
- Drawing
- Painting
- Magazines
- Photocopies
- Printouts
- Stamps
- Stencils
- Stickers

Prompts

Sometimes when I sit down with my journal I'll know exactly what it is I want to journal about. Perhaps there's been an event I want to record or there are some feelings I need to process. Whatever it is I use it as a prompt to get me started. It informs what colours I reach for and what imagery I may decide to use. At other times I'll simply start to play, I don't have anything specific to journal about so I reach for things at random and the page will develop in its own way to have meaning.

When you are first starting out I recommend having a prompt jar. When you sit down to work in your journal, pick a prompt to get you started. You can continually add or remove prompts to keep it fresh. Here are some you might decide to add to your jar:

An Unusual Fact	Last thing that made you laugh
A time you made a good choice	My perfect evening would be...
How I unwind	My pet peeves
I wish I could...	Your favorite place to be
The best compliment you ever received	Song on the brain
Pick a poem or song lyric	A favorite childhood memory
An Apology	A motto to live by
What are you most grateful for	A good thing that happened this week
What is your earliest memory?	My proudest moment
A favorite childhood book	Everyone needs...
My guilty pleasure	I wish I was...
I am afraid of...	Last time that I cried