

The Importance of Journal Writing

A journal is a series of personal writings called *entries*. A journal differs from a diary because in a journal you are more specific about what you are writing. Professional writers often keep journals. It is a good idea for students and non-writers to keep journals as well in order to record and comment on personal experiences and, perhaps most importantly, to practice writing every single day. Moreover, if a life is worth living, it is worth recording. Mike Trout is great at baseball because he has practiced every day since he was a child. If you want to become a great writer, you must practice your writing every single day. An instructor may assign eight to ten papers. This is a good number, but you need more opportunities to write. Furthermore, a student needs somewhere to write where he/she does not have to worry about the “teacher’s red ink” all over her writing.

What do most people do on January 1st of each new year? That is right—they set New Year’s Resolutions. This is good, but why wait until the beginning of each new year to write down goals? In a journal, you have an opportunity to set goals. In 1953, Yale University conducted a study on students who had written goals and those who did not, and what researchers found was that three percent of all students graduating from Yale that year had written goals. In other words, ninety-seven percent of the students who graduated that year did not have written goals. Twenty years later, researchers interviewed the surviving members of that class. What they found was that students who had goals lived healthier, happier, better lives, but what was most impressive was that the three percent who had written goals earned more money than the other ninety-seven percent combined! This study should convince you that goals are absolutely necessary.

Using a Personal Mission Statement to Chart Your Career Course

A personal *mission statement* is "connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes in fulfilling it." The idea is that if you live by a statement of what's really important to you, you can make better decisions. Why worry about saving minutes when you might be wasting years? In the end, it is not what you became, but who you become that people will remember.

A mission statement can be something like "I want to become a role model of possibility for my family as well as others in the community."

A mission statement can change and become bigger as we find ourselves achieving more in life.

How to Write Goals

Goals must be stated in the positive and be clearly posted somewhere where you will see them every single day. Write your goals neatly and largely enough so that they stand out in a journal or any place else, and write them down somewhere in your house where you will see them every single day. This journal was taken from a student I had over twenty years ago named Martha.

Goals

Make appointment with a counselor twice a semester, one at the beginning of the semester and the other appointment at the semester.

Become much better in grammar, understanding the relationship between grammar and writing by writing everyday in my journal.

Transfer to U.C. Berkeley with majoring in British Literature by the fall of 2003.

Model Journal Entry

March 1, 2001

Today I made an appointment with a counselor to learn more about transferring to U.C. Berkeley. I became a little frustrated from waiting until my name was called. But I decided the wait was worth it. (I have realized the hard way that not everyone will jump up and down because I now have goals, but this is all right. I am not doing it for them; I'm doing it for me!) After speaking with the counselor. I have realized that I am closer to transferring to Berkeley than I originally thought. I found an old Sparklets bottle, and I dropped in three dollars and thirty cents worth of change. It is small, but if I will need money for books and other things when I get to Berkeley. Tomorrow, I plan to visit the English lab and work the relationship of phrases and clauses to writing effective sentences. (I really have to work hard avoiding comma splices and fragments in my writing. My boyfriend called yesterday, and he seems to have this negative attitude about my moving away to another part of the state. Since I mentioned transferring to Berkeley, he has changed I think. I really like him, and sometimes I feel need him. But as the professor says, "When one decides to 'plug in,' someone else is plugging out." I want so much to succeed! I know the professor is right—"It is not a matter of can we do it, it is a matter of do we want to do it." I want to do it! I have wasted so much time up until now. But I can forget about the past. It is time to think about the future. I must alter my sail and when the winds are too strong, I will keep sailing and never, ever even think of giving up! Clarity is power! As we think of something, so we become this something!" I will post my goals everywhere, even beside my bed, and I will not be afraid to tell the people I respect the most what my goals are because this will put pressure—"positive pressure" the teacher calls it"—on me to succeed! Make no mistake about it—I will

succeed whether my boyfriend goes along with me or not!

Note: Martha ended up transferring to Berkeley and went on to U.C. San Diego for graduate school.

Exercise 2: Writing Practice

Write down three goals that you want to accomplish within the next two years. Be sure your goals are clear. Then mention why they are important for you to accomplish. Make sure your goals are clear and have definite times for completion.

Review the Two Examples Below

A. Transfer to a university.

B. Transfer to USC with a 3.7 G.P.A with a declared major in English and a minor in psychology by September of 2019.

A. Save money

B. Save \$2,500 dollars by the end of the year by putting away three dollars and fifty cents daily in an interest drawing account.

A. Improve in my English.

B. Improve my English skills by going to the Learning Center at least twice a week, writing a journal entry every day and reading from the novel *Of Mice and Men* at least twenty minute a day..

Notice how B examples are much more specific and thus more effective?

Goal #1 _____

Goal #2 _____

Goal #3 _____