

Types of Journals

Journals are collections of personal writing about or around a topic or general theme. Entries should be made on a regular basis – daily or frequently - and are usually kept together in a notebook or folder. The important thing is to write, the only way for learners to improve their writing or to demonstrate to themselves that they indeed can write. This is a general strategy for writers at all levels but is particularly appropriate for beginning writers. Learners should date each journal entry. Give learners strategies to use to get the words down when they do not know how to spell; such as, write down the first letter of the word and draw a line or write the word as best you can and underline it to remind yourself that it is possibly misspelled. Model writing in your journal and be willing to share your writing, but be aware that some learners' entries may be too personal to share with others. Journals are not writing assignments to be corrected or graded, but should be used for communicating and writing practice. The writer may elect to revise and extend some of the journal entries into more formal assignments rather than starting from scratch.

Personal Journals/Diaries:

Personal Journals in which learners reflect their own experiences can be written or dictated to a scribe,, and can include drawing as well as writing. If young children keep a diary, parents should also keep one in order to model the process for children. Entries in personal journals can be good first drafts for teaching the writing process.

Dialogue Journals:

Dialogue Journals are kept by two people (teacher and learner, or child and parent) in which a written conversation over a variety of topics takes place. Learners write informally about a topic of interest, a concern, a book they are reading, or a topic they are studying.

Response Journals/Reading Journals:

In Reader-Response Journals, learners are asked to respond to some experience and can take a variety of forms:

- Noting new vocabulary words
- Writing about the character they identified with
- Making predictions about what might happen next
- Writing about the part they liked
- Writing about how the reading made them feel
- Writing about what they would have done in the particular situation described
- Writing about how they could use what they just read about

Entries may be open ended or directed, e.g. what advice would you give the character, what do you think will happen if this story continued, or how the character is like me.

Double-Entry Journals:

For a Double-Entry Journal, learners divide their journal page into two parts. In the left-hand column, they write quotes or notes from their reading. In the right-hand column, learners write their response or reaction to the information they have written in the first column.

Learning Logs:

Learning Logs are journals in which students reflect on learning experiences they take part in. They can respond to questions they have about the experience or content, reflect on how well they understand the presentation, connect the material to their own lives, or comment on their interest in the content.

Sources:

Rasinski, T., & Padak, N. (1996). Holistic reading strategies: Teaching children who find reading difficult. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Merrill/Prentice Hall, pg. 152-154.

Thistlethwaite, L.L. (2000). Literacy resource series: Book E: Writing strategies. Central Illinois Adult Education Service Center (CIAESC), pg. 49-52.