

Nature Journaling

A note to teachers/parents



Inspired by *How to Teach Nature Journaling* by John Muir Laws and Emilie Lygren

Nature Journaling Builds Transferable Thinking Skills

- Journaling helps you think critically and creatively for yourself.
- The transferable practices and learning habits that students use in their journals will increase their success in other subjects.
- Students can use journaling to become active community members and engaged citizens of the world.
- Drawing, writing, making observations, and analyzing those observations build brainpower.
- Combining pictures with text reinforces visual literacy and language acquisition. The abilities to articulate ideas, connect text to pictures, and engage in critical thinking are all reinforced by a consistent journaling practice.

Why Use A Nature Journal?

- To slow down, pay attention, and experience awe and wonder
- To develop creativity and critical thinking skills
- To develop science identity through authentic science practices
- To nurture connection with nature
- To build an inclusive culture of curiosity in the family or classroom
- To support interdisciplinary learning

To Get Started

Provide students with one of the prompts below. Have students use the guidelines on page 2 to journal in nature each week.

- Choose a nearby tree
- Choose two different leaves
- Choose any flower
- Choose an animal

"If the point were making big discoveries or pretty pictures every time, I'd have quit long ago. The point is waking up, paying attention, noticing and exploring. the point is remembering, again and again, that the world we inhabit is infinitely rich, complex, fascinating, and beautiful. The point is learning from the world and renewing a sense of belonging within it."—Sarah Rabkin

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Student Guidelines

1. Prepare by gathering observation tools such as rulers, magnifying lenses, cameras, colored and regular pencils, pencil sharpener, paper, or a notebook.
2. Take time to select a small part of nature for making observations. What captures and will hold attention? You might start with a large area at first, then focus in on a specific topic like pollinators, or a snail, or leaves, or a flower or soil or plant and animal relationships or cloud patterns. What do you notice?
3. Set a goal to both draw and write and to use numbers in the descriptions (measurements, calculations, population, estimations, time, temperature etc.).
4. Consider each of the five senses (maybe not taste), in writing and drawing descriptions. Finish the statement, "I notice that..."
5. To connect observations to knowledge, ask yourself what the space or object reminds you of and write or draw that description.
6. Stimulate curiosity by finishing the statement, "I wonder..." Develop a question about your observations. What are you curious about?
7. Be sure to relax and have fun and develop a sense of wonder!



Journal Entry Elements

Remember not to judge the journal by the quality of the art. These are the types of things that a nature journal entry should have.

Baseline Data

- _____ Date
- _____ Place
- _____ Weather/temperature
- _____ Time

Measurements

- _____ Indicate size of object sketched
- _____ Indicate parts that are life-sized
- _____ If magnified, indicate magnification

Sketch and Description

- _____ Drawing or diagram
- _____ Notes and descriptions
- _____ Detail of interesting part
- _____ Label parts
- _____ Color or notes about color
- _____ Identify object sketched
- _____ Habitat sketch

Other Things to Include

- _____ Connections
- _____ Questions

Choose which of these elements will be used in the journal entry. See if you can capture all of them!

