

# How to Maintain a Gratitude Journal for Stress Relief

Write Down the Things You're Grateful for Each Day

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Developing an attitude of [gratitude](#) toward the people, things, and events in your life is a life-affirming and effective way to strengthen your [emotional resilience](#) and reduce stress, among other things. Maintaining a gratitude journal makes it easy to get in the habit of focusing on the positive in your life while also reaping the [benefits of journaling](#).

## How to Start a Gratitude Journal

The following are [simple steps](#) to maintaining a gratitude journal, which is a [useful tool for stress management](#).

- 1. Decide on a Journal.** You may want to maintain your journal online or in paper form. When [deciding which journal method to use](#), think about:
  - Whether you'd rather type or print. If you spend all day on the computer, writing on paper may be a good change.
  - Where you'd like to do the bulk of your writing. Will you want to journal in bed before going to sleep? Can you steal a few minutes alone in the den each night?
  - Whether privacy is an issue that may affect your decision. Keep in mind that a computer is not entirely secure, especially online word processing software. Likewise, your personal laptop may be better if you'd like to keep your thoughts private in your home.
- 2. Decide On A Framework.** There are a number of ways that you can structure your journal entries. Do what works best for you and change it up if you need to. The main idea is to get yourself into a place of reflection and gratitude.
  - You can write long, descriptive paragraphs about what you appreciate in your daily life.
  - Your gratitude journal can consist entirely of lists.
  - You can write a preset number of items per entry (10 per day, for example).
  - You can just resolve to write about whatever seems right for a particular day.
- 1. Commit To A Schedule.** An important aspect of the long-term success of your gratitude journal is the frequency with which you use it.
  - It's usually best to aim for once a day or several times per week in the beginning, but allow yourself some wiggle room if things get busy.
  - You want to make a commitment that will keep you inspired to write, even if you aren't always in the mood because this exercise can help *change* your mood.
  - Just don't allow your schedule to be so rigid that you'll be tempted to give up the whole plan if you slip up once or twice.
- 1. Just Keep Writing.** Many people find that their whole attitude changes once they've been keeping a gratitude journal for a while. They tend to notice things throughout the day that they may want to include in the journal, things they wouldn't have otherwise noticed.

- To maintain a more optimistic attitude, be sure to write regularly.
- If you find yourself skipping days with increasing frequency, gently remind yourself why you're maintaining the gratitude [journal](#) in the first place.
- Be grateful that you are able to get back into the habit of writing again anytime you want. Enjoy!

#### **4 Tips for Gratitude Journaling**

- Gratitude journals tend to be most effective when you write about three items at the end of each day. This is regular enough and simple enough to be do-able and writing at the end of the day tends to bring the best benefits.
- Remember that you may want to read over your journal entries in the future. This can be a great pick-me-up when you're feeling stressed or depressed.
- Experiment with the types of things you write about. If you find yourself always mentioning the obvious things ("I'm grateful for my children") every day, challenge yourself to notice the subtle things ("Today I had caramel ice cream cone, and it was amazing!")
- Remember that all gratitude doesn't need to be saved for the journal. Tell the people in your life how much you appreciate them. From people in your family to sales clerks and postal employees you encounter in your day, everyone likes to know that they're appreciated. Their positive reactions can help put you in a [positive mood](#), too!